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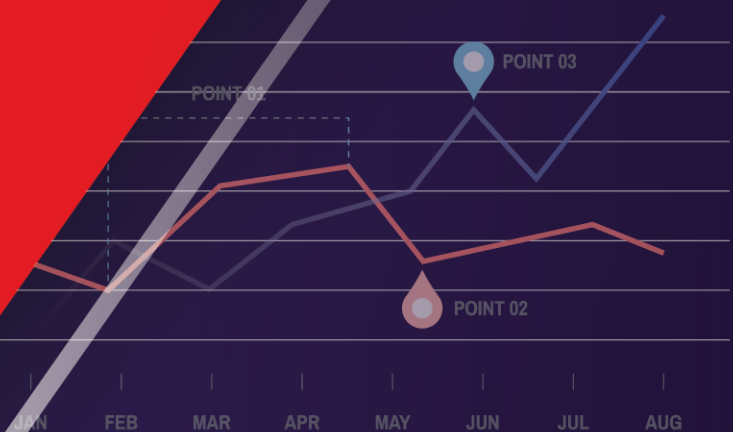
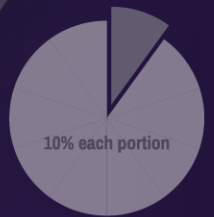


IELTS Writing

TASK 1 and TASK 2

MAT CLARK

Part 2 IELTS Writing Task 2



With more than 100 Essays of the IELTS Examiners in the various sectors evaluate readers are very close compared to the IELTS test.



TOPIC 1

Increasing travels between countries enable people to learn different cultures or to increase tension between people from different countries?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Globalisation is a *catch-all* term that refers to any activity that involves more than one country, for example, travel from one country to another. The dramatic increase in transnational travel in recent years has sparked controversy over the potential impacts of this trend on individual countries, especially those new member states of globalisation. Some people are concerned that the upsurge in new arrivals will prompt local *hostility* against visitors, instead of promoting their understanding on mutual cultural background. This notion should be rejected as one can see many facts in favour of this development between countries.

The first reason why international travels would never bring conflict is *rooted in* the fact that both visitors and locals are economically motivated. International travel opens up opportunities for business development throughout the world. *Entrepreneurs* are interested not only in the domestic market but also in the overseas market. Foreigners should learn the culture of a country before whining over the local people. In turn, locals should show their hospitality to visitors in exchange for their trust. They share a view that acceptance of each other's cultural background is a necessary condition for cooperation.

Understanding a culture has other implications. Differences in social background, cultural values and religious belief might make the *discrepancy* of foreigners and local inhabitants on some issues indelible; however, the higher interaction, the higher level of communication and understanding. Arabians, for example, used to consider westerners as their *foes*. Now they have *concrete* relations with their western allies in many fields. In the initial stage, their divergence seemed inherent but *over time*, with better mutual understanding, they take the same position on many issues.

Undeniably, it is likely that in some *resorts*, foreign visitors *repel* the local



community with their *scant* regard for the local environment and conventions when they first arrive. However, it should be noted that most offense is accidental, rather than intentional. Instead, visitors disobey rules and conventions simply because they have no knowledge of them. This situation is expected to be improved with the passing of time when visitors from different countries increase their knowledge of a local culture.

According to the above analysis, we can observe that the increase in the international travel should not be taken as the cause of any conflict that arises between two countries. Alternatively, one should recognise its role in improving mutual understanding between two countries.

Vocabulary:

1. catch-all=all-embracing
2. hostility=enmity=resentment
3. rooted in=derived from=based on
4. entrepreneur-tycoon=mogul =industrialist
5. discrepancy=disagreement=difference
6. foe=enemy=rival
7. concrete=tangible=solid
8. over time=in due course=sooner or later
9. resort; tourist resort: holiday resort: beach resort; scenic spot: place of interest:
10. repel=revolt-repulse
11. scant=limited=scarce



TOPIC 2

When international media (including movies, fashion shows, advertisements and other TV programmes) convey the same messages to the global audience, people argue that the expansion of international media has negative impacts on cultural diversity. What is your opinion?

SAMPLE ANSWER

the growing popularity and uniformity of some media programmes (such as TV shows, movies, fashion shows) is causing worldwide concern. Many people have strong views toward this trend. In my opinion, international media is closely linked to cultural globalisation and cultural homogeneity.

The *dominance* of international media is a *sign* of Western cultural imperialism and has the potential to *thwart* cultural diversity. It is not a secret that international media is owned and operated by *a handful* of giant corporations, such as Time Warner. They control large sectors of the media market and place national media companies at risk. The *contraction* in the number of media owners will cause a *proportional* reduction in the variety of programmes broadcasted. For example, painting, music and movies accessible in the media have a small number of genres, imposing restraints on one's knowledge of artworks of different cultural backgrounds.

In addition to seizing control over those creative industries, global entertainment companies affect cultural diversity by reshaping the *perceptions*, beliefs and norms of ordinary citizens in different countries. Most of the cultural values and *ideals* promoted by the leading mainstream media are of American origin. American culture values individuality, maximisation of one's benefits and material wealth, rather than communal life and family *solidarity*, the values and norms previously measured in many Asian countries. Unfortunately, many Asian people now imitate American people, causing the alteration of their perceptions of family. This radical change can be attributed to those movies and TV programmes that portray the success of American individuals or corporations.



The loss of media diversity IS also responsible for people's narrow sense of ways of life. The ruling class of many countries speaks English, favours Western food, wears Western-style jackets and even prefers Western weddings. Young people *are captivated by* American basketball and some even daubing the names of NBA stars on their school sweatsuits. All these transformations in life are the result of the audience's exposure to Hollywood movies, TV shows and spoils reports. The loss of media diversity will lead to degradation of culture and to a minimisation of cultural diversity. It is a worrying trend, as people need cultural diversity to preserve and *pass on* their valuable heritage to future generations, including lifestyle.

As shown above, international media, controlled by a handful of transnational media corporations, is exporting Western culture worldwide and putting many indigenous cultures at the risk of extinction. The uniformity of media programmes has led to that of artworks, norms and ways of life wherever international media goes.

Vocabulary:

1. dominance=domination=power
2. sign=symbol=mark=signal=indication
3. thwart=prevent=spoil=ruin
4. a handful of = a small number of
5. contraction-reduction
6. proportional=relative
7. perception=view=opinion
8. ideal=value=belief=principle
9. solidarity=unity=harmony=cohesion
10. be captivated by=be obsessed with=be passionate about=be addicted to=be keen on=be enthusiastic about
11. pass on=give=impart=convey



TOPIC 3

There is a disagreement on the impact of increased business and culture contact between countries on a country's identity. What is your opinion?

SAMPLE ANSWER

One of the most *conspicuous* trends in the 21st century is a closer *connection* between countries, in both economic and cultural aspects. There is a widespread worry that this will lead to the gradual *demise of* countries' identities. This issue should be viewed and analysed from *multiple* perspectives.

When a country tends to develop a closer relationship with the rest of the world, it does not necessarily give up its culture. Culture is not a *disgrace* to but an asset of a country. An indigenous culture can distinguish one country from others, attracting foreign visitors and yielding high income. As most tourists travel abroad for learning different cultures and sampling different ways of life, such as Beijing opera in China, Japanese tea culture and Thai temples, many countries have responded with protecting and preserving their cultural identities, in an effort to keep themselves in the list of the most popular destinations. Increased tourism instils fresh *life force* into these countries, aiding the *conservation* of their features.

While tourism provides a driving force for cultural conversation, some components of a culture, such as traditions, customs or taboos might die out over time. It seems that in some countries, the locals have become more accustomed to *exotic* cultures. It reflects the combined effects of the invasion of foreign cultures, either through media or through direct business interaction. For example, two decades ago, sex was a *taboo* subject in China and most Chinese people felt embarrassed to talk openly about it. Over time the Western culture has *permeated* into the Chinese lifestyle, and the Chinese people have broken many of their *time-honoured* traditions. It occurs in the rest of the world as well.

As outlined above, increased *interaction* between countries in the domains of business and culture can either strengthen or undermine the identities of countries involved. To date there is no definite answer to this question.



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Vocabulary:

1. conspicuous=noticeable=prominent=striking
2. connection=linkage= relation=relationship
3. demise=disappearance=vanishing=fading
4. multiple=manifold=numerous=various=many
5. disgrace=dishonour=shame=humiliation
6. life force=soul=essence:
7. conservation=protection=preservation
8. exotic-bizarre=outlandish=from afar-mysteriously unusual
9. taboo=offensive=embarrassing=unacceptable=disgraceful=dishonourable=humiliating
10. permeate=seep into=pervade=leak into
11. time-honoured-age-old=long-established
12. interaction=interplay=communication=relationship

TOPIC 4

Some people believe that culture will be ruined if it is used to earn tourism revenue, but others consider that tourism is the only way of protecting a culture. Discuss both sides and give your own opinion.

SAMPLE ANSWER

There is little room for doubt that tourism is one of the fastest-growing industries in the world. However, its impact on culture remains a source of constant debate. This essay will elaborate on both positive and negative effects of tourism from a cultural perspective.

Providing economic incentives for cultural preservation is *unarguably* one of the main contributions of tourism. To many tourists, culture and history are



what they first consider when choosing a *destination*. Their mindset has been recognised by many tourism sites and money has been subsequently directed toward cultural protection, including the *maintenance* of key historical sites. Tourism is therefore one of the primary forces contributing to the preservation of a culture.

In addition to raising financing, tourism can make an *indigenous* culture known to the world and rally support worldwide to protect it. When a historic site or a site that shows a country's cultural heritage is made accessible to the public, visitors from all over the world will soon flock there. They will share their experience in the local culture with their friends and families once they return home, assisting this site to gain international *fame*. Both financial and technological support will flood in for the conservation of natural and cultural resources.

On the negative side, tourism develops sometimes *at the expense of* part of culture. Food, festivals, costumes and other stimulating elements of a culture are highlighted to *entertain* tourists, constituting an *insult* to the locals and causing damage to the unique nature of a culture. Moreover, cultural commercialisation has made the sacred elements of a culture *commonplace* and tourists are encouraged to attach little importance to a unique tradition, which cannot be found elsewhere.

In the light of these facts, one can conclude that tourism is neither a boon nor a bane to cultural preservation. While its *endeavour* to protect an indigenous culture should be recognised, it has *put* the *integrity* of a culture *at risk*.

Vocabulary:

1. unarguably= unquestionably =indisputably=undeniably
2. destination=site=place
3. maintenance=preservation=upholding=protection
4. indigenous=original=aboriginal
5. fame=reputation=recognition=eminence
6. at the expense of=at the cost of
7. entertain=amuse=keep somebody amused
8. insult=offence



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9. commonplace=ordinary
10. in the light of=in view of=considering=taking into account
11. endeavour=effort=attempt
12. integrity=entirety=unity
13. put at risk=endanger=jeopardise

TOPIC 5

Some people argue that immigrants should adopt the local culture when immigrating to a new country. An alternative view is that they can adapt to a new environment by establishing a minority community. Discuss these two views and give your opinion.

SAMPLE ANSWER

The world in the 21st century is marked by high population mobility. When an increasing number of people have chosen to leave their *motherlands* and *resettle* in a new country, they are at crossroads whether to blend in with the local culture or to cherish their own cultural heritages by establishing a minority community. In my opinion, the *convergence* of different cultures does not require one culture to yield to another. Instead, it can be achieved by building minority communities.

Most immigrants, at the first stage of their life in a new country, are faced with *merging into* the new culture and integrating into the new society. Accepting the local culture by observing the local traditions is a good *starting point*. Doing so enables immigrants to interact with locals, especially in the workplace, where locals predominantly work. For example, in Western culture, people *customarily* keep a certain distance from each other when having a conversation, whereas in some other cultures, the *closeness* of physical distance is taken as a sign of mutual trust. Examples of this kind are many. A migrant to a new country should recognise the differences and observe local conventions. It will help avoid embarrassment and bring a sense of comfort.



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While adopting local customs and blending into the local culture, migrants can follow their individual cultural traditions. The coexistence of different minority communities in a country benefits both immigrants and locals. On the one hand, it enables immigrants to *counteract* the stress that results from culture shock and to increase confidence in their residence in a new country. On the other, the *flourishing* of different cultures contributes to the establishment of a multi-cultural environment, a *prerequisite* for attracting skilled workforce from all over the world to settle.

By comparing the immigration options above, one can conclude that immigrants can adopt local conventions and cherish their own cultures simultaneously. This allows both locals and immigrants to co-build a harmonious multi-cultural community.

Vocabulary:

1. motherland= native country
2. resettle=relocate
3. convergence=union=junction =meeting
4. merge into=blend into=integrate into
5. starting point=basis
6. customarily=routinely=habitually=regularly=usually
7. closeness=nearness=proximity
8. counteract=offset=neutralise=counter
9. flourishing=blooming=budding
10. prerequisite=requirement=condition=must=precondition



TOPIC 6

The advantages of the spread of English as a global language will continue to outweigh its disadvantages. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

In these years, there is a growing recognition that English is well on its way to becoming the dominant global language. The impact of this trend is a subject of intense debate. It is my opinion that advantages of a dominant global language will continue to outweigh its disadvantages.

The rise of a global language is a facilitator of cross-cultural communication and the communication between people with different language backgrounds. In different areas of global communication, such as science and news, recognising a common language removes communication barriers and increases convenience. On many formal occasions, English, as a working language, boosts efficiency and avoids misunderstanding. Likewise, the exchange of essential information like *knowhow* and technologies will be tremendously *prompted*.

One might argue that the rise of a global language would endanger other languages, in a belief that an increasing number of people have turned to English as their first language. This viewpoint is flawed. The spread of global English has little, if any, influence on non-English-speakers' language proficiency. People might be motivated to learn English as a foreign language but do not necessarily drop their native language because learning beginner or intermediate level English is sufficient for day-to-day communication.

The dominance of English as a global language is, therefore, not a cause of the loss of language diversity. Its negative effect is reflected mainly in cultural *imperialism*. As international media recognises English as its root language, most of the broadcasted information is related to the lifestyle, norms and beliefs of English-speaking countries. It might over time put many minority cultures *on the verge of* extinction, when those ethnic groups gradually adopt the Western culture. The effects of shrinking cultural diversity are *destructive*, causing people



to live in a simple and monotonous world and think and act in similar ways.

The development of English is overall, a positive global trend. It *connects* people who previously spoke different languages and enables them to exchange ideas, although it might lead to the loss of cultural diversity.

Vocabulary:

1. know-how=knowledge
2. prompt=encourage=stimulate=trigger
3. imperialism=colonialism
4. on the verge off = on the brink off=on the edge of
5. destructive=damaging=devastating=injurious=detrimental
6. connect=unite=link

TOPIC 7

Aircrafts have been increasingly used to transport fruits and vegetables to some countries where such plants hardly grow or are out of season. Some people consider it a good trend, but some people oppose it. Discuss both views and give your opinion.

SAMPLE ANSWER

There has been a steady increase in the demand for imports throughout the world in recent years, including those *perishable* items, such as fruits and vegetables. Despite the *boom* in this business, importing agricultural products is very often criticised as unnecessary and *extravagant*, especially when air freight is involved. The criticism was correct in the past, but *at the present time*, there are *indications* that this trade activity has brought various benefits.

At first, it is important to note that contrary to popular belief, imports are



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now increasingly affordable to the general population. Thanks to the rapid development of the freight transport industry, air travel has become an economical mode of transport, resulting in the subsequent decrease in the cost of importing. Meanwhile, technical advance in the food processing industry has made it much easier to preserve fresh fruits and vegetables over a long-haul air flight. Because of the wide availability of imported crops, there are more *varieties* in the food market, leading to the drop in the price of imports. The supply of products in the market is less likely to be influenced by seasonal factors, and an adequate intake of nutrition is guaranteed for the general population throughout the year.

Another fact to note is that import and export normally *go hand in hand*, and a country that imports goods from other countries does not necessarily suffer a loss. Trade is not *unilateral* but bilateral. Some countries are noted for an agrarian economy, while others specialise in manufacturing industrial products. Countries differ in their product structures because they have dissimilar natural resources, climates, and geographical features. By adopting an *enlightened* policy and promoting trade activities with other countries, a country can facilitate the exchange of goods, services and capital with the rest of the world and promote economic development.

On the negative side, some countries might become addicted to importing goods and *overlook* the possibility of developing a *self-contained* economy. *Scarcity* of resource or lack of technology might disable a country from producing crops to feed its population, but it cannot be taken as an excuse for relying heavily on imports. Government funding in scientific research can make it possible to achieve a breakthrough and increase *the yield*, thereby resolving food supply crisis.

Countries are therefore advised to promote international trade and to develop their own industries *simultaneously*. Positive attitudes toward importing goods from other countries demonstrate a government's *stance* on the international trade, although the government should also prevent itself from relying on imported goods.

Vocabulary:



1. perishable=easy to rot
2. boom=rapid growth=sudden increase=expansion=surge
3. extravagant=wasteful =luxurious
4. at the present time=at present=currently
5. indication=sign=hint=clue
6. variety=selection
7. go hand in hand=be closely connected=be inseparable
8. unilateral=one-sided
9. enlightened=liberal=open-minded
10. overlook=neglect=ignore
11. self-contained=self-reliant=self-sufficient
12. scarcity=deficiency=shortage=dearth=deficit
13. yield=harvest=the amount of crops produced
14. simultaneously=at the same time
15. stance=position=stand

TOPIC 8

Millions of dollars are spent on space research every year. Some people argue that the money should be spent on improving living standards on Earth. Do you agree or disagree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

In recent years, there have been more and more countries involved and interested in long-term space projects. Because of the enormous research expenditures incurred, the *value* of space projects has been disputed. Some people suggest that government funding should be *diverted* toward improving the living standard of ordinary people. In evaluating the merits of space ambition, one



should adopt a broader perspective. The investment in space research can be paid off someday in the future.

The first reason to support it is that our planet is now facing an unprecedented resource problem, which can be tackled only by discovering and mining new resources on other planets. The *overuse* or scarcity of some resources on the Earth is a severe problem. Rare metals, such as gold or silver, will eventually be depleted, as industrial production expands. These metals and other natural resources, although rare on Earth, might *abound* on other planets. In that case, conducting space research is a promising *adventure*.

Meanwhile, the world's population is now growing to a stage where there are too many people for the planet to support, highlighting the need to seek land suitable for people's *resettlement* off the planet. Even if new urban developments are able to accommodate the increasing population, water and electricity supply, waste treatment, *sewage* disposal and sanitation will become *unmanageable* for the capacity of our planet. As there are countless planets orbiting stars throughout the universe, one can be confident that at least one of them is suitable for our second home planet. Mars, for example, bearing a close resemblance to the Earth, is considered a potential *backup*.

In addition to searching for a shelter for future generations, space programmes contribute considerably to the well-being of the Earth in some other aspects. For example, by monitoring the ozone hole, global warming, the loss of rain forests and other environmental threats to human survival, remote sensing satellites help people trace the *recovery* from the worst environmental threats and thereby improve the quality of life. Meanwhile, space research provides a new *platform* on which scientists can carry out experiments and make new discoveries in a variety of fields, such as agriculture.

As suggested above, in locating new resources, positioning new settlements, addressing environmental concerns and facilitating scientific discovery, space research will prove to be not only worthwhile, but also crucial to the survival and sustainability of human civilisation.

Vocabulary:

1. value = merit = worthiness = worth
2. diver = redirect = reroute = switch



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3. overuse=overexploitation
4. abound=be plentiful=thrive=flourish=proliferate:=grow in great numbers
5. adventure=voyage=journey
6. re-settlement=relocation=immigration
7. sewage= sullage=waste water
8. unmanageable=uncontrollable=unruly
9. backup=candidate=replacement
10. recovery=healing=recuperation
11. platform=stage

TOPIC 9

Space travel to the Moon is often cited as one giant leap for mankind. Yet some people argue that this achievement made little difference to our daily life. What is your opinion?

SAMPLE ANSWER

The idea of travelling through space, even living and working on other planets, has fascinated people for centuries. Despite numerous setbacks and daunting expenditures, travelling in the outer space has never failed to attract people ' s attention and provoke controversy. Sixty years after the first Moon landing, people question whether the *feat*, previously thought of as a giant leap for mankind, has substantially benefited people ' s lives. In my opinion, landing on the Moon has enormous *relevance* for the quality of life, albeit not always



explicit.

The first implication of Moon landing is reflected in the likelihood of travelling on other planets. Moon, as the object in the outer space closet to the Earth, can serve as a launch site for the journeys to other planets. Having no atmosphere, the Moon is a permanent base for people to *observe* the universe easily and provide them with sufficient evidence they require for decision making on a great many significant issues, which are likely to have direct impact on them. For example, one can learn more about the treat of potentially hazardous objects that are likely to hit the Earth and destroy our civilisation.

Another remarkable breakthrough made by the Moon landing is that it reignites people's enthusiasm in the natural sciences. When today's youths become increasingly interested in such subjects as commerce, finance and business, space exploration successfully attracts and retains talents in space-related technologies. These young minds are convinced that *unravelling* the *unknown* of the universe is *feasible*, despite many challenges. They are inspired to think for the future, instead of being preoccupied with contemporary issues only.

It should also be noted that the Moon has water, the basic resource for people's survival, and it abounds in solar energy, a clean and readily *obtainable* resource. It is also believed that minerals are plentiful there to be exploited. Someday, if people are forced to move off the Earth, the Moon might be the best shelter. Although people have not yet fully explored this possibility at this stage, *preliminary* investigation is *imperative*.

Based on the above-mentioned facts, one can conclude that the Moon landing greatly impacts on distant future, although its effect is not apparent *for the time being*. The Moon is the eventual *gateway* to other planets and potentially the place of residence for the future generations. The scientific knowledge and economic benefits to be gained by building a sustainable Moon base are huge.

Vocabulary:

1. feat=achievement=accomplishment
2. relevance=significance=importance=weight



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3. expire it=overt:
4. observe=watch=monitor:
5. unravel-find an answer to=work out
6. unknown=mysterious=unfamiliar
7. feasible=practicable=viable=practical=realistic
8. obtainable=available=accessible
9. preliminary=initial= preceding
10. imperative=necessary=essential=crucial=vital
11. for the time being=for now=for the moment
12. gate way=entry=doorway= access

TOPIC 10

Some people argue that the government should spend money on public services and facilities, but not on the arts. Do you agree or disagree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

The role of arts in modern life is unique, providing people with entertainment and yielding various psychological rewards, such as relief from stress. Despite these benefits, the arts have been taken as luxury goods in many cases. It is suggested that public money of a city should be concentrated in projects like public facilities, which are more likely to bring immediate benefits to the public, rather than the arts. There are a number of facts indicating that this position is right.

Public facilities, widely accepted as one of the main *precursors* to a city's



development, should be one of the highest priorities. Those underdeveloped cities in particular, should direct sufficient funding toward public facilities. While *municipal* office buildings, courthouses and post offices are essential components of public services, libraries, hospitals, parks, playing fields, gymnasiums and swimming pools are available to the public for social, educational, athletic and cultural activities. By boosting spending on public facilities, cities are more capable to satisfy the needs of citizens and improve their standard of living.

In addition to social benefits, there are economic *merits* that public facilities can offer to communities. An *integrated* transport network (maritime, land and inland waterways transport and civil aviation), for example, promises the smooth and speedy movement of goods and people in a city. Industrial products, as well as agricultural produce of a city, can be delivered to other cities in exchange for steady income. Of equal importance are public Internet facilities. Providing access to information by improving Internet and other telecommunications facilities has relevance to the ease with which businesses in a city receive, process, utilise and send information. It is no exaggeration to say that entrepreneurs, either from home or abroad, will first examine the infrastructure of a city before deciding whether to pursue business opportunities there.

The arts, by comparison, although enabling people to see the world and the human condition differently and to see a truth one might ignore before, do not *merit* government spending. The first reason is that the arts—referring to music, film and literature altogether—are more likely to attract the investment of the private sector than public facilities. Businesspeople continue to invest in the arts in the expectation of earning lump sum income and the arts in return, continue *to flourish* without the government spending. Meanwhile, the arts are a key component of a culture and naturally passed down from one generation to another. Unlike public facilities, they require no money to survive.

It is therefore clear that construction of public facilities should be given the foremost consideration. The concern about the well-being of individual citizens and that of a city is more acute than the *apprehension* about the survival and prospects of the arts, something that businesses have a *stake* in.



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Vocabulary:

1. precursor-forerunner-foundation
2. municipal =urban=metropolitan
3. merit=value=advantage
4. integrate=amalgamate=combine=mix
5. merit =deserve=earn
6. flourish=thrive=burgeon=boom
7. apprehension=anxiety=uneasiness=dread=fearfulness
8. stake—involvement=concern=interest=share

TOPIC 11

Some people argue that the government should spend money only on medical care and education but not on theatres or sport stadiums. Do you agree or disagree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Where public money goes is an issue of broad interest to the general public. Some people advocate that the government should fund the sectors that bring *tangible* and immediate benefits to the public, such as medical care and educational systems, while opponents suggest that those large urban developments, such as stadiums and theatres, are worth government funding. In my opinion, the possibility remains that the two opinions can be *reconciled* and the government can coordinate budgeting to meet the needs of both.

Medical care is essential to the economic and social well-being of a country, particularly of an underdeveloped country. Both empirical knowledge and academic research suggest that making education available throughout a country



and eliminating illiteracy can pave the way for economic development. By receiving education, children from impoverished families can *shake off* poverty, climb high in the social ladder and live better off. Education also allows citizens to secure employment and earn regular income, thereby maintaining or improving their standard of living. For a country as a whole, education is linked to skilled workforce and to high productivity, affecting both resource use and national output.

Government interference in healthcare and medical services is also highly recommended. Availability of affordable medical service is a mark of the social and economic development of a country. By providing the needy people with medical service, a country can inspire the loyalty of citizens. People feel *assured* living and working in a country where they can be given medical service when unemployed, sick, injured or retired. By comparison, if they cannot afford the high cost of visiting the clinic, hospitalisation, or buying *drugs*, they are less likely to enjoy their living. Social solidarity will eventually suffer.

Although education and medical services are fundamental to the stability and development of a country, it is not to say that theatres or sport stadiums have no *redeeming feature*. In the *hierarchy* of human needs, those needs for food, *shelter* and health are among the basic. After these targets are attained, people turn to higher aspirations, entertainment and recreation. Leisure facilities like stadiums and cinemas satisfy people's needs in these fields. A game between one's *motherland* and a visiting country can raise people's sense of national pride and ethnical unity. The cinema brings artistic pleasure to everyone.

To draw a conclusion, the decision to finance theatres or sport stadiums depends on the financial situation of a country. When an economy comes to maturity, the launch of recreational and entertainment projects of this kind is reasonable.

Vocabulary:

1. tangible=concrete=solid=material=touchable
2. reconcile=tailor=modify=alter=adapt
3. shake off=get rid of=get away with
4. assured=confident=self-confident=poised=self-assured



5. drug=medicine=prescription drug
6. redeeming feature=desirable quality
7. hierarchy=pyramid=pecking order=chain of command
8. shelter=safe haven=housing=accommodation=lodging
9. motherland=fatherland=nation state

TOPIC 12

The advocates of international aid believe that countries have a moral obligation to help each other, while the opponents consider it unnecessary, because money is misspent by the governments that receive it. Discuss these two points of view and give your opinion.

SAMPLE ANSWER

International aid refers to money, equipment or services that are provided by a country or international organisation for countries that need them, known as recipient countries. It reflects a moral ideal of mankind, that is, mutual support and interdependence, according to those donor countries. However, some people adopt an opposing view and tend to believe that aid money can be *misspent* by the *recipient* countries. My view is that people should not *withhold* the *provision* of money or material resources in aid.

Humanitarian aid is a moral imperative. Members of the global community have the responsibility to provide relief to each other, especially to those disadvantaged members and those victims of natural disasters and civil *unrest*. This aid is essential to the homeless and useful in helping recipient countries return to their normal state after major disturbances. For example, with the humanitarian relief obtained worldwide on an annual basis, victims of natural disasters (such as tsunami, draught, flood) throughout the world can recover



rapidly and rebuild their homeland.

Humanitarian relief is meanwhile an instrument, to promote peace and security. The deep-rooted hostility between some countries can *result from* the disparity in the material standard of living, or from physical distance. The provision of humanitarian relief *opens up* the possibility of cultural, economic and social interaction between countries, and thereby easing tension. Recipient countries can thus participate in the global economy, a strategic step in *shaking off* poverty.

Admittedly, aid money is sometimes misused or spent on unintended destinations, but these *pitfalls* can never overshadow the benefits. Misuse can instead raise awareness of the global community to a *venal* regime and pressure the recipient country to adjust its system. Meanwhile, it can be tackled by tight regulations and scrutiny. In general, the abuse of international aid is an *isolated* event, so its effect should not be overstated.

From what has been discussed above, one can reach a conclusion that the role of humanitarian relief is not only to deliver urgent assistance to populations in need but also to strengthen *ties* between countries. Although fraud and corruption occur every now and then, they can be addressed in a way that enhances future aid *endeavours*.

Vocabulary:

1. missspend=mishandle=misuse=abuse
2. recipient=receiver=beneficiary
3. withhold=suspend=defer
4. provision=supply
5. unrest=turmoil=conflict=turbulence
6. result from=stem from=be caused by
7. open up=increase=raise:
8. shake off=get rid of
9. pitfall=drawback=downside
10. venal=corrupt
11. isolated=exceptional
12. tie=bond=link
13. endeavour=attempt=effort



TOPIC 13

Some people think the government should pay for health care and education, but there is no agreement about whether it is the government's responsibility. What is your opinion?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Not surprisingly, health care and education are two areas of government priority in most, if not all, of the countries around the world. However, many tend to see the both areas as citizens' individual responsibilities. This belief is partly right. The government and the citizens should be jointly responsible for the cost of education and health care service.

The first point to note is that government funding for education is of great benefit to families with children and the society as a whole. There are occasions on which parents cannot afford the cost of their education and their savings are meagre, compared with the *formidable* tuition fees being charged by a tertiary institution. Poor academic experience can impair one's *employability* and put him or her into a seriously disadvantaged position. Government spending addresses this issue by providing *aspiring* students with access to a comfortable learning experience. In this knowledge-based society, possibly nothing is more valuable than the access to education.

Similarly, an individual should receive health care treatments, especially lifesaving ones, whether he or she has the means to pay. Access to health care is a basic human right and a measure to ensure a decent *standard of living*. In the event of the need for urgent or emergency treatment, government spending enables *sufferers* to receive immediate health care services. This is the fulfilment of the government's responsibility to its members. Needless to say, health care treatment costs are, in general, unaffordable to low income families. Government's financial support is therefore required.

Despite these facts, it is immoral that individuals shirk responsibility and try to pass all medical costs on to the government. In view of the fact that the



government raises financing primarily from taxpayers' income, individual's over-exploitation of a health care system will in fact add a heavy burden on those hardworking and *good-hearted* citizens. Particular attention should be paid on those people whose health problems are attributed to their poor personal living habits (smoking, drinking, substance use or inactive lifestyle). In such cases, they should not be entitled for public medical services.

As suggested above, education and healthcare services are of primary importance to citizens, and the government has the responsibility to ensure that those services are available and affordable. However, it is not to say that the government should *bear* the costs of all healthcare and educational services that the citizens currently enjoy.

Vocabulary:

1. formidable=remarkable=astounding= daunting
2. employability=the ability to find a job
3. aspiring=promising=aspirant:
4. Standard of living=living standard=level of affluence = level of comfort
5. sufferer=victim=patient
6. good-hearted=charitable=benevolent=generous=altruistic
7. bear=assume=shoulder=take on

TOPIC 14

People should keep all the money they earn and should not pay taxes to the state. Do you agree or disagree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

The role of taxation is providing funds necessary for carrying out a variety of functions in a country. However, to many taxpayers, especially employers, paying tax remains the biggest *headache*. In my opinion, tax revenue is essential to a country. Below are some of its main functions.



Although many taxpayers see income tax as an *appropriation* of their *earnings*, tax is in fact a relief to taxpayers and their families, for example, by providing a *safeguard* against unemployment and a solution to other problems that they may confront in life. For example, those who lose their earning ability because of injuries, diseases and disabilities are entitled to the government's financial support, derived mainly from tax revenue. There is no point in denying that tax is the principal source of finance that sustains many of the benefits offered by the welfare system of a country. Although most workers are not the beneficiaries currently, they will count on these benefits in their *later years* (as pensioners). So will their dependents (children and parents).

Taxation is meanwhile an effective tool by which a society can achieve the redistribution of income and close the gap between *haves and have-nots*. In most countries, as a general rule, the higher the personal income, the higher the income tax. By imposing different tax rates, the government is able to distribute the tax burden across social classes, reducing income disparity between the rich and the poor.

Corporate tax is deemed by business as a regular cost, which must be kept to a minimum, but it is not necessarily a bane. By levying different types of tax, the government can exert an influence on macroeconomic performance, which in turn influences the income of the business world. When the economy is on the verge of a *recession*, the government can reduce the tax and present tax *incentives*, which proves to be an effective policy in reviving the economy. By contrast, during the periods of growth, the government can raise the tax rate so as to prevent an overheated economy and combat inflation. It is fair to say that tax is one of the main tools in establishing a healthy environment conducive to business's sustained growth.

What have been discussed above are the benefits brought by taxation, which are essential to a country, its businesses and individual taxpayers. Although many taxpayers feel pressured by taxes, they will eventually benefit from the taxes they have paid and should therefore bear tax liabilities.

Vocabulary:

1. headache=problem=annoyance



2. appropriation=acquisition=seizure=requisition
3. earning=remuneration=wage-income-take-home pay=salary
4. safeguard=protection=precaution
5. later years= last few years of one's life
6. haves and have-nots=rich and poor
7. recession=downturn=depression=slump
8. incentive-encouragement

TOPIC 15

It is widely accepted that people who have post-school qualifications earn a higher salary than those less educated do. University students should, therefore, pay all the full cost incurred over the course of obtaining a college education. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

With the labour intensive economy gradually giving way to knowledge-focused economy, the access to higher education has become an issue of broad interest. The proposal to charge all university students with tuition fees and allow no exemption arises mainly from the concern that tertiary education has to compete with many other urgent demands for public funds and struggle with underfunding. I believe that this policy, if implemented, will have an accumulative effect on the well-being of either individual students or the society as a whole.

When laying the hope of future development over students, the government cannot shirk from the responsibility to finance them. The sustained growth of a country rests on young talents. In this sense, the government is investing, not spending money. A standard example is America, a country investing multimillion dollars in higher education on an annual basis and sponsoring students' study by different forms of aid, such as scholarships, subsidies, allowances and student loans. It can be expected that these well-educated aspiring people, after finishing their education, will constitute a main



drive of a state's growth. Moreover, the government should plough a reasonable proportion of tax revenue, most being sourced from parents, back to their children.

Meanwhile, it is worth mentioning that some schools tend to force a complex of charges over students, with the aim to extend their profit margin. Ignorant of their not-for-profit nature, many universities might *diviate* from their most important tasks, such as improving teaching quality. The persistence of this problem will make their academic service much less credible and quality of teaching and faculty staff uneven. A university can cover its expense by various means, such as the receipt of donation, or the government's funding, instead of levying a high fee over students.

The reasons cited above have justified why university students need not pay more than a lower payment. While depending on young generations, the society should be more considerate of their situation. The effort to encourage tertiary education participation will pay back sooner, rather than later.

Vocabulary:

1. give way to=succumb to=yield to
2. exempt! on=exception
3. accumulative=growing=increasing=incremental=spiraling
4. shirk=evade=avoid=dodge=shun
5. sustained=everlasting=eternal=endless=unending=perpetual
6. rest on=hinge on=depend on
7. aspiring = hopeful=aspirant
8. deviate=diverge=stray
9. persistence = continuance
10. uneven=unbalanced = unequal



TOPIC 16

Only government action can solve housing shortages in big cities. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Housing shortage has become a serious urban social issue in many parts of the world. It has been argued that only when the government has taken actions, can demand for homes be fulfilled. Yet to the best of my knowledge, the government alone cannot cope well with housing shortages.

One of the main objections to government intervention is that it would hamper the private sector and simultaneously pose a huge burden upon the state. In countries where the government is on a tight budget and the homeless population is large, the involvement of private property developers is required and recommended. Not only does it release the government from the burden of funding large-sized construction programmers but it also fosters the housing industry. Given its role in attracting public consumption and accelerating economic development, the housing industry should be at the mercy of the market, rather than the government.

Another drawback of state control over the housing market is that it could result in the stagnancy of construction quality, functionality, facilities and other aspects of housing. Apartment blocks or other residential constructions would be built in a similar pattern and the cityscape would be monotonous. Excessive uniformity, especially in the size and number of rooms, will fail to meet comprehensive requirements raised by citizens on properties.

Despite these objections, government intervention is essential in some segments of the market and can render more resistance to citizens. Single parents, the people with disabilities and other disadvantaged people are among those who are not ready to afford commercial housing. The government can provide them either with housing allowance to purchase their private properties or



directly with economical houses.

As indicated above, in addressing homelessness and inadequate housing, the joint effort of both government and private sector is required. While government intervention would impede the property market and negatively influence the supply and demand relationship, government assistance is essential for low-income families and vulnerable individuals in need of housing.

Vocabulary:

1. objection=opposition=argument against
2. at the mercy of=reliant on
3. monotonous-repetitive
4. uniformity=sameness
5. comprehensive=wide-ranging=ample
6. intervention=interference=involvement
7. segment=sector=section
8. allowance=subsidy=payment
9. joint=combined=shared=united

TOPIC 17

There are social, medical and technical problems associated with the use of mobile phones. What form do these problems take? Do problems of using mobile phones outweigh the benefits?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Across the world, especially the wealthier parts, the mobile phone has taken the place of telephone as an electronic telecommunication *device*, with the majority of the adult, teenager and even child owning one. As this technology has become *rife*, its drawbacks, which can be seen from social, medical and technical perspectives, deserve people's greatest attention.

Similar to many other hi-tech products, such as computers, mobile phones have detrimental effects on users' health. For example, long-time heavy' phone



users seem to be more *prone to* certain types of cancers, although evidence to date is inconclusive. Another *lethal* health concern is the link between mobile phones and road accidents. It is argued that *motorists* have a much higher risk of *collisions* and losing control of the vehicle when driving and talking on the phone simultaneously, despite sometimes using hands-free systems.

When the mobile phone has brought considerable convenience, people's obsession with convenience has meanwhile caused enormous *disturbance*. That's why the use of mobile phones has been prohibited in many public places, such as libraries, theatres, hospitals and even transports, such as trains, buses and aircrafts. Speaking at increased volume is considered impolite or even offensive. In schools, students are required to switch off cell phones before the class begins because mobile phones are responsible for a high amount of class *disruptions*.

When its downside persists, the mobile phone has proven indispensable in modern life. It is handheld, lightweight, portable and multi-functioned, allowing users to send text messages, exchange music files, make voice calls, browse Internet, and so forth. Meanwhile, within twenty years, mobile phones are expected to be more *pervasive* as technical advances and mass manufacture will make them low-cost personal items. Given those factors, the mobile phone will continue to perform its role as a key social tool, by which one keeps in touch with others much more easily than did the generations before.

As suggested above, the contribution of the mobile phone to the society is prominent and people's

dependence on it for communication is an *irreversible* trend, although it has a number of problems should be well handled.

Vocabulary:

1. device=equipment=appliance=instrument
2. rife=widespread=prevalent=ubiquitous=predominant=rampant
3. prone to=susceptible to=vulnerable to
4. lethal=fatal=deadly=life=damaging
5. motorist=driver=car user
6. collision=crash=accident



7. disturbance=annoyance-interruption
8. disruption=interference=distraction
9. pervasive=prevalent=omnipresent
10. irreversible=permanent=irrevocable=unalterable

TOPIC 18

Do you agree that modern technology has given US more leisure time than before?

SAMPLE ANSWER

In the history of mankind, possibly no century witnessed more progress in technology than the 20th century did. People have become increasingly interested in assessing the correlation between technological development and leisure time. As far as I am concerned, people's leisure time has been *shrinking* as a result of the tremendous advance in modern technology'.

Admittedly, thanks to modern technology, people can thus spend less time on *compulsory* activities (e. g. , working), but it should also be noted that other non-compulsory activities have come to consume a larger proportion of people's *after-work life*, such as education. If leisure refers to the time spent in non-compulsory activities, people's leisure time has in fact contracted. The growing concern on education has increased the likelihood that people are willing to give up their leisure lives for educational opportunities. This trend is attributed mainly to competition and fears of job loss, causing people to turn to on-the-job training and education for secured employment. Another incentive is the increasing flexibility of educational institutions. Worthwhile knowledge can be *passed on* from one generation of workers *to* another in different forms of education, such as televised teaching and online courses. It comes at the cost of their leisure time.

People's leisure lives are continuously eroded also because of *ubiquity* of modern technological tools (e. g. , computers with Internet access and telecommunications equipment). It is noteworthy that people now take fewer and



shorter vacations following the increase in the number of technology-based activities. For example, cell phones and laptops make people accessible to their superiors wherever they go and wherever they are. People are more stressed than any generation before. Meanwhile, people now have to engage in more everyday processes than ever before, such as shopping, food ordering, and so on. It seems that the time budget is burdened because more time should be invested in activities that were previously ignored or unnoticed.

While posing a threat on people's leisure lives, technologies might on other occasions, give workers more flexibility in controlling their work and more quality time after work. A traditional workweek has been cut, as the amount of manual work continues to decline because of automation. The availability of various means of transport has released working people from lengthy *commutes*. The line between work and private life is much more blurred, with many workers shopping, checking private emails and reading newspaper online even when working.

From what has been discussed, one understands that the development of technology has tremendous impacts on people's daily lives, although the exact impacts are not conclusive. When the *proliferation* of new technologies, such as computers, allows people to manage their own working time and *accommodate* family needs and lifestyle choices, it has locked them in a struggle to cope with more tasks in daily lives.

Vocabulary:

1. shrink=decline=diminish=contract
2. compulsory=required
3. after-work life=personal life
4. pass on...to=hand on=transfer
5. ubiquity =prevalence
6. commute=the journey between home and place of work
7. proliferation=increase=mushrooming
8. accommodate=give room for



TOPIC 19

Earlier technological development brought more changes to the life of ordinary people than recent technological development do. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Undoubtedly, people are now enjoying one of the greatest technological boom times in human history. Although there is a consensus that social changes coincide normally with technological advances, it is a contentious issue whether the earlier technology (e. g. , machines, cars, airplanes) impacts on people's lives to a larger extent than does the recent technology (e. g. , Internet, computers). In my opinion, the recent improvements in technology' have more far-reaching consequences.

While the invention of automobiles was a *landmark* in the technological evolution of *humankind*, the Widespread use of computers and telecommunications technology has dramatically *reshaped* the nature of the society. One might have benefited a lot from one's improved ability to move rapidly from one place to another because of the availability of automobiles, yet this benefit has been *discounted* because of the advent of the Internet. With Internet access, the world has become accessible to people and one can perform many tasks at home (e. g., grocery shopping) and let their fingers do the walking.

Lifestyles are changed by recent technologies in equal measure. Before computers and the Internet were created, most working people struggled with a lack of leisure time and the balance between family life and work life. They were fully occupied by employment and various chores, such as shopping. With Internet, they are now able to spend much less time on those routine, *dull* activities and lead active leisure lives.

Modern technologies also account for the evolution of people's perception of society. People tend to develop, modify and repurpose technology for their own use. Interdependence, previously a core virtue of many societies, is now undermined. Cell phones allow people to insulate their private interactions from the culture around them and to create their own micro-cultures. The mobility given by



modern transport meanwhile, allures them to leave their place of birth and work and live elsewhere. Cultural *norms* are subject to modification and the *communal* lifestyle is going out of fashion.

In conclusion, whether one likes it or not, technology' will continue to evolve, with the resulting changes impacting the lifestyles and cultural norms continuously. While the earlier technology had enhanced the quality of life and generated revenue for people, the recent technology has made them lead a different lifestyle from previous generations.

Vocabulary:

1. landmark=turning point=watershed event
2. humankind-mankind
3. reshape=reform=restructure=remodel
4. discount=impair
5. dull=tedious=monotonous=dreary
6. norm-custom=normal ways of behaving
7. communal=collective

TOPIC 20

It is said that the fast pace of our everyday life, as a direct result of the rapid development of telecommunications technology and travel industry, has negative effects on individuals, nations and the globe. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Not surprisingly, many aspects of people's daily lives have undergone considerable changes because of the recent development in technology. It is a particular concern that the pace of everyday life is becoming faster, resulting from the development in cars, air travel, telecommunications technology and the Internet. As well as benefits, this trend is to bring problems.

On the positive side, the fast rhythm of life requires people to enhance



efficiency when working and then allows them to enjoy longer leisure time. With the advance in telecommunications, people can make inquiries by phone, instead of travelling long distances. Internet access makes it possible for one to perform various tasks without leaving their offices. Even though people have to travel every now and then for meeting business partners, visiting clients in other cities or other purposes, modern transport networks reduce the amount of time they spend on commutes.

The acceleration of the pace of life also implies the expansion of people's social circle. In the past, social relationships were limited by physical factors such as geographical distance and low mobility, but nowadays, one can travel further and get acquainted with more people with those technological advances, such as the railroad, the automobile and the telephone. For instance, the rapid *penetration* of telecommunications technology has made the mobile phone a key social tool and people rely on their mobile phone address book to keep in touch with their friends.

On the negative side, the fast-paced lifestyle is responsible for the upsurge in lifestyle-related problems. Jobs become demanding and require workers' full commitment, resulting in their depression and pressure. Underneath *the facade* of continued *contraction* of official working hours, employees are actually working longer, primarily because fax, e-mail or other communication devices have made them accessible to their supervisors, colleagues and customers after work. They have to respond instantly to voice and email messages from others. Private life has to be sacrificed.

According to the facts outlined above, the doubts about the negative effects of the acceleration of pace of life are not well-grounded. People now enjoy greater well-being, which is reflected in more quality family time, less travel-related stress and close contact with friends and family members. However, they might have to accept frequent *intrusions* as a *by-product* of convenient communication.

Vocabulary:

1. penetration=invasion=permeating
2. facade=disguise=cover-up



3. contraction=reduction
4. intrusion=interruption
5. by-product=unwanted product-anything produced in the course of making another thing

TOPIC 21

Nowadays people can carry out tasks such as shopping and banking even business transactions without meeting each other face to face. What are the effects on individuals and the society?

SAMPLE ANSWER

With the wide use of the Internet, the way people conduct business and live their lives has vastly changed. Many businesses have websites that allow people to conduct business, execute deals and finish transactions online, as an *alternative* to a lengthy commute. Although people are thus free from the constraints of geography and time, there are some consequences of this trend that demand attention.

Supposedly, with Internet access, people are able to perform transactions and to do shopping without leaving home, but meanwhile they have to pay a heavy *price* for it. One of the most negative aspects is, for instance, that it alters their social behaviours and habits. For many people, to spend part of the day on the Internet is quite normal. It can be expected that being addicted to Internet use, most of home *telecommuters* or Internet users will become socially isolated. Poor *social life* and feelings of loneliness are those problems that are very often found among heavy users.

It is also likely that people have become increasingly accustomed to living in a world that appreciates convenience and *inactivity* and they do not want to evade those *maxims*, it gives explanation of why the sedentary lifestyle is now prevailing and why people spend little time on leisure or recreational activities.



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Time has been spent in front of the computer or Internet. The net result is that they suffer serious loss of vision, back pain and obesity. It is true that many people finally end up with struggling with deteriorating health.

Despite the negative effects, the Internet has its positive implications to the well-being of society. Online shoppers are able to seek out the lowest prices for items or services. Manufacturers, therefore, have to improve product quality and lower price levels in an effort to win the favour of consumers and secure a stable market share. Telecommuting-working at home using a computer is a solution to traffic congestion, the urban air pollution and petrol use.

As outlined above, people's growing obsession with Internet use, such as online shopping or banking, has both immediate and long-term impacts on health, social involvement, lifestyles and emotional well-being. Although it is of great value from a net surfer's perspective, people should step up efforts to minimise the negative effects.

Vocabulary:

1. alternative= replacement= substitute
2. supposedly=theoretically=purportedly
3. price=penalty
4. telecommuter=teleworker
5. social life=spending time with friends and other people
6. inactivity=idleness=immobility=indolence=sluggishness
7. maxim=rule=principle=tenet=guideline=motto=dictum=axiom=truism



TOPIC 22

Many people are optimistic about the 21st century and expect scientists to make positive changes to the world. To what extent do you agree or disagree with their optimism? What changes would you like to see in the new century?

SAMPLE ANSWER

As the 21 st century continues to *unfold*, many technologies have arisen, most of which were previously out of the reach of people's comprehension. While some people are *content* with the current standard of living and tend to owe it to technical advances, an opposing point of view is that not all these changes to lives are positive. I am of the opinion that there is still room for improvement and many problems remain unsolved.

The continued improvement in technology undoubtedly accelerates industrialisation but meanwhile leads to the *deterioration* of the natural environment. Accompanied by technological development, many problems, such as over-exploitation of natural resources, intense use of *artificial* fertilisers, reliance on automobiles and deforestation, have arisen and intensified. Even worse, little progress has been made toward addressing these problems, possibly because implementing environmentally friendly policies will inevitably impede the development of energy-intensive industries. That is why the use of petrol continues to climb, despite the fact that many countries pledge to curb petrol use and discover or invent alternative resources.

Another problem is that many technologies have put people at great risks and highlighted the need for innovation. For example, the spread of the Internet is directly responsible for people's sedentary lifestyle and many health problems, such as obesity. The rise of the fast food industry, owing mainly to the development in the food processing technology, is linked to diabetes, stroke and heart disease. Many stress-related diseases are attributed to the increasingly fierce competition in society, a result of technological development. Fears of job loss have become one of the most common sources of social anxiety in these years, as computerisation has undermined the traditional position of labour by



eliminating jobs. All these problems demand quick solutions.

Some other problems are associated with technology as well, although the actual impacts remain unforeseen. For example, the future of genetic engineering, a radical new technology intending to introduce genetic changes to a species, either animals or plants, and to increase crop yield, is dim. To date there is no compelling evidence to show that GE food has a good *track record* for human safety, especially when it has been found related to thousands of poisoning cases

Overall, whether technology is a blessing to people remains yet to be seen, so does what the 21st century can bring to them. It seems to be a fact that whenever a new technology arises, there must be some problems that follow. When people are impressed by the benefits brought by a new technology, it is important to evaluate its negative impacts and take *precautions* in advance.

Vocabulary:

unfold=display=disclose=clarify=become known=reveal

content=satisfied =pleased

deterioration=corrosion=weakening=worsening

artificial=man-made=synthetic=non-natural

track record=past performance=reputation=background-history=profile

precaution=preventative measure=safeguard

TOPIC 23

Many employees may work at home with modern technology. Some people claim that it benefits only workers, but not employers. Do you agree or disagree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

The spread of telecommunication technology—using the Internet, telephone, fax, scanners or text messaging—has opened up a new range of possibilities for working at home. Discussion has centred on whether it *represents* a benefit to workers alone, but not employers. In my opinion, employers can take full advantage of home working as well.



By allowing employees to work at home, employers can widen the base from which they recruit and boost the chances of *capitalising on* rich human capital. For instance, parents with childcare responsibilities and those with disabilities prefer to work at home. Distance between their *work place* and their place of residence has never ceased to be a problem. Homeworking enables working people to perform their jobs *at ease*, and thus gives employers more options in human resource use.

Another benefit obtained from home-working is the boost for staff motivation. By working at home, employees can manage their time on their own and strike a balance between work and rest. Similarly important is that, without the presence of their immediate supervisors, they feel less stressful and more comfortable. Those two factors both play a part in boosting their *productivity* and job satisfaction.

Apart from those benefits, homeworking might have its drawbacks. A challenge that employers have to face is the difficulty in managing and monitoring employees' performance. Whether employees are as likely to meet a deadline when working at home as they are in the workplace remains unclear. Similarly difficult is to maintain *team spirit* because employees have limited *interaction* between each other. Furthermore, staff training, an integral part of increasing human capital, is not practical in a business where homeworking predominates.

Therefore, it is clear that although employers can benefit a lot from integrating homeworking into his or her business, c. g. , introducing more flexibility and increasing employees' job satisfaction, they should work out methods to prevent the problems that are likely to arise from this move.

Vocabulary:

1. represent = stand for-signify
2. capitalise on= take (full) advantage of= make the most of=benefit from
3. work place=place of work
4. at ease=comfortably=free from anxiety
5. productivity=output-efficiency=yield
6. team spirit=cohesion=unity
7. interaction=communication=contact



TOPIC 24

The leisure industry is growing rapidly. The active role of modern technology in people's leisure lives nowadays has made them less creative. Do you agree or disagree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Nowadays, leisure time activities are set to play a larger part in people's daily lives than ever before. There has been a perception that nowadays people could not derive the same pleasure as they did from the entertainment of yesteryear, as technology has made them less creative. This view is open to *debate*.

The maturity and popularity of network technology, *together with* the expansion of the software industry, has given today's entertainment seekers many opportunities to share pleasure, and enhance their *intelligence*. In the past, people could only play chess, cards, or other similar games with their friends. Now they can challenge other players via the Internet, *professional* or *non-professional*, familiar or *unfamiliar*. Some online games, by *simulating* real life conditions, enable players to exercise various tactics in dealing with difficulties. They improve players' abilities as well.

Technology also enables any person in a contemporary society to become enlightened and *empowered* and exhibit a high degree of creative power. Creativity stems primarily from knowledge. In the past, one's knowledge developed slowly or even *stagnated* throughout much of his/her life, simply because the access to information was limited. The situation has been subject to dramatic change, with the advent of modern technology. By gathering information from a variety of sources, modern people can adopt, adjust and *restructure* different strategies to address an issue. Even in doing simple jobs, such as gardening, dressing, people can expand their creative energy and add new varieties, regarding it as a means of self-expression.

Some people might argue that watching TV, a common leisure activity, has



seriously hampered the viewers' development in creativity. Their argument is based on an assumption that TV viewers are passive when absorbing information presented by TV and respond with no active thinking. However, there is evidence that television programmes are becoming increasingly educational and instructive. For example, quiz shows encourage critical thinking, while educational channels, such as Discovery, broaden watchers' knowledge. While advertisements *bear* aesthetical and ideological values, talk shows display the art of languages. What have been discussed above refute a prevailing notion that modern technologies stifle people's creativity and make them passive and mechanical entertainment seekers. Modern technologies, as shown in above discussion, have made people more creative, and also given them more enjoyment in leisure activities.

Vocabulary:

1. debate=dispute=argument=heated discussion
2. together with=accompanied by=coupled with=combined
with=alongside
3. intelligence=intellect:
4. professional=proficient=trained=skilled
5. non-professional=inexperienced=amateur
6. unfamiliar=strange=unusual
7. simulate-replicate-imitate
8. empowered=competent=authorised=capable
9. stagnate-stand still=languish=remain unchanged
10. restructure=reform=reorganise
11. bear=have



TOPIC 25

Many people think that public libraries should only provide books and should not waste their money on expensive hi-tech media, such as softwares, DVDs or videos. Do you agree or disagree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

A library, generally, refers to a place storing and managing books that can be booked or borrowed. In these years, there is a trend toward integrating new technologies, such as DVDs and videos, in libraries. *Opponents* argue that the emphasis should be placed on providing books, rather than on increasing modern equipment. Modernisation is, in my opinion, an inevitable tendency, although the *enlargement* of a library's *reserve* should not be treated lightly.

One of the main advantages of using computers or other hi-tech products is improving efficiency. By recording information of books such as titles, authors, dates of publishing, or even summaries in a computer system, e-library allows readers to find a book promptly. Likewise, librarians are more able to store, seek out and manage books. Moreover, with the central network connecting libraries throughout a country or worldwide, a library user can easily locate a book in a library wherever it is.

Meanwhile, one should note that e-books have become increasingly popular, increasing the likelihood that e-library will sooner or later take the place of a conventional library'. Compared with paper books, e-books not only use much less space but also give readers more enjoyment in reading. For example, readers can customise their viewing experience easily by adjusting font, size and style of characters, accessing the books that have the same subject, and modifying screen contract, and so forth. E-books appeal to young users or children specifically because of its remarkable ability to demonstrate or explain a subject vividly via pictures, videos or even movies.

The importance of updating the facilities is therefore evident, but it should be stressed that the primary responsibility of libraries is to provide as many books as possible to the public. A good library' is judged not by the extent to which its facilities arc modernised, but by how much information it can supply. The more



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books the library can make available, the more visitors it can attract. At the international level, nearly every *distinguished* library gains its fame by providing a vast collection and a *delicate* selection of books.

As suggested above, the library should focus not only on the instalment of modem equipment, but also on purchasing more books. The top priority for a library is to maximise the reserve of books and make the resource available.

Vocabulary:

opponent=challenger=antagonist

enlargement=amplification=growth=rise

reserve-storage:

distinguished=famous=renowned=:celebrated=:notable

delicate=careful

TOPIC 26

It seems that with the increase in use of mobile phones and computers, fewer people prefer to write letters. Will the skill of writing disappear completely?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Text messages, emails and letters are everyday communication tools, although nowadays, text messages and emails appear to gain popularity while letters are used less frequently. The fears that writing skills will be attached with less importance are rooted mainly in the concern that the growing popularity of mobile phones and computers is about to make emails and text messaging much more popular. Such worries are unsupported.

A majority of daily communications involve written correspondence, whether it takes the form of emails or letters. As different from communicating in speech, communicating in writing requires a large number of techniques. The



prevalence of emails and text messages will not change the purposes, contents and conventions of communication, but merely medium, font or sentence length. For example, successful written communications are normally measured by clarity and accuracy, two elements that remain unchanged despite the upsurge in the use of text messages and emails. An email or text message sender should pay the same attention to such elements as vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, wording and tone as a letter writer does in order to make sure that the reader understands and interprets the message as intended. Any misunderstanding or misinterpretation will cause dire consequences.

Another fact to note is that all communication is interpersonal and interactive, thereby requiring information senders to use language properly and convey messages clearly and precisely. In order to become a successful communicator, one should plan, *tailor*, and devise his or her writing according to the characteristics of the reader. Writing a message without considering the intended reader will increase the possibility of poor understanding or even misunderstanding. For example, choosing the right tone in communication is of great importance. Readers make *assumptions* about people's mood and intentions and speculate on the implied meaning of the messages, according to the tone suggested by words. Getting the right tone is therefore an important writing skill that is likely to influence the success of communication. It is particularly true in cases where the messages people send contain emotional components. Failure to manipulate these components properly will cause discomfort or *hard feelings* of the reader.

The examples that are outlined above have apparently *overturned* the prevailing notion that writing skills will vanish sooner or later as a result of the increased use of text messaging and emails. Written communication requires a good understanding of the rules of language, such as grammar, vocabulary and tone. Without a good command of those writing skills, a communicator will encounter many awkward situations in daily communication.

Vocabulary:

tailor=adapt=modify=alter



assumption=supposition=hypothesis=notion=belief

hard feeling=anger

overturn=reverse=invalidate

TOPIC 27

Some people think that radio has become out-of-date, and there is no need to listen to the radio for entertainment and news. Do you agree or disagree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

In the past, radio broadcasting was deemed as the most convenient and important source of information. However, with the emergence of other mass media, there is a perception that radio as a medium will be *at stake* in the future if it does not undergo any significant change. In my opinion, such pessimism is ungrounded.

One of the main reasons why radio would not become obsolete in the near future is that driving is rife across the world as a way of life. Radio is a regular piece of equipment installed in a car, and to car users, listening to the radio while driving is an effective *means* of taking full advantage of their time and gaining the latest information, such as news, weather forecast, share markets, and so forth. Increased car use gives radio high mobility and its *exposure* continues to lead other media. For those people who have no time in watching TV, radio provides immediate and easy access to information. Its continued popularity is also linked to its high affordability. Radio broadcasting is, in general, accessible to the audience with charging no fee. Another overt advantage is that a radio set is *portable*. On the occasions where people cannot watch TV, read newspapers or surf the net, they can listen to the radio.

The advent of other technologies has also sustained the popularity of radio. For example, people can get radio via satellite, the Internet and cable nowadays. There are many other electronic devices, such as MP3 and MP4 players, which allow people to listen to the radio more easily and to use it for



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various entertainments, such as sharing their music collections. Although radio is unable to convey messages with sight and motion as television or Internet does, the improvement in those hi-tech devices will ensure that the radio is able to serve the needs of audiences as it always did.

As indicated above, radio broadcasting has many advantages that are scarcely found in other mass media, either electronic or print. With the developments in technology that enable radio to perform more functions and become more widely available, radio broadcasting will continue to form a very large segment of the mass media.

Vocabulary:

in the past- once upon a time =some time ago=in history

at stake=at risk=in danger=in jeopardy=threatened

means=method=instrument=way=measure

exposure=coverage=publicity

portable=moveable=transportable

TOPIC 28

People in many countries do not wear their traditional costume. Some argue that they would forget their history and tradition. Do you agree or disagree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Traditional costume, both national and regional, is universally recognised as an *integral* clement of every single culture. Despite its importance to a culture and ethnicity, it is now less frequently worn by people, at a time when Western formal and informal clothes are rife. Below are a number of facts that suggest the role of traditional costumes in protecting ethnicity and *identity*.

Wearing traditional costumes, first of all, reminds people of many distinct characteristics of their culture. How people perceive their traditional costume



shows the extent to which they are willing to respect, and retain their cultural heritage. In Vietnam, for instance, female office workers are generally required to wear Ao Dai, a traditional dress, as a custom being handed down from generation to generation. It is a national symbol, giving millions of Vietnamese a sense of ethnic identity, wherever they are. Besides, it represents cultural values of Vietnam and shows the perceived position of females in a Vietnamese society. Despite the success of Ao Dai, it is a rare example in today's world, where most of the traditional costumes have been marginalised by Western-style business suits. People see national costume only in theatre, film and TV.

Another point to support the importance of traditional costume is their presence in many social settings. Traditional costumes are required on many occasions, either formal or informal. Generally, they come in two forms: one for everyday occasions, the other for festivals and formal wear. Both have cultural meanings. For example, in many societies, a considerable number of traditional costumes evolved specifically for the wedding ceremony, and the wedding couple, as well as guests, are expected to wear traditional clothes, a symbol of eternity and solemnity. Traditional dresses in most cases differ in styles and vary according to circumstances. For example, in China, ceremonial clothing tends to be dark while lighter-coloured clothing is worn mainly by the common people for everyday life and around the house use. As the culture is very often reflected in the way of life of a society, the role of traditional costumes in a culture is undisputed.

Traditional costumes are therefore, worthy of people's concern and should be preserved; however, it does not necessarily mean that one should wear traditional costumes all the time. People wear clothing in general for functional reasons. Traditional costumes are of cultural and social importance but might not suit every circumstance. For example, exercise clothes are needed when people participate in physical exercise and play sports. Western-style suits are used more broadly on formal occasions where people of different cultural backgrounds gather for serious issues, such as business. Dressing in a standard manner is a *demonstration* of respect, the key to mutual trust.

As shown above, the costume, as a distinctive style of dress of a particular people in a particular country, should be distinguished from the wardrobes people are wearing every day in ordinary settings. Failing to maintain the unique



characteristics of traditional costume of a country will surely cause destruction on the *integrity* of a culture.

Vocabulary:

1. integral=essential=vital=fundamental=central=important
2. identity=individuality=distinctiveness
3. demonstration=expression=display=manifestation=revelation
4. integrity=completeness=unity

TOPIC 29

People think that old buildings should be knocked down and give way to the new buildings. Do you agree or disagree? How important are old buildings to us?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Every item of property has its own *lifespan*. So does every building. City planners are very often confronted with a debate concerning whether an old building should be *deconstructed* or maintained. In my opinion, it depends on whether the targeted building can satisfy the needs of the city.

There is no denying that some old buildings are of *aesthetic*, archaeological or architectural values. They might be either integral to a culture as a symbol of a city or country or unique in the *domain* of architecture. *Demolition* of such buildings will *inflict* damage to cultural heritage and prevent architects from drawing their inspiration from them *predecessors*. Because of their uniqueness, old buildings are very likely to provide a source of tourism income, if maintained well. It is fair to say that old buildings of this kind are much more important than any new building and performing more functions than any new building does.

With regard to other old buildings, possessing no specific value while becoming *dilapidated*, entire destruction is an acceptable and understandable decision. Low in quality and poor in conditions, some old buildings are actually



posing a danger on users and *pedestrians*. They might stand in the way of a new road line or impede other forms of urban development. Whether they have been *renovated* or not, these buildings *blemish* the landscape and provide no justification for continued maintenance. Replacing old buildings with new ones meets the *renewed* needs of the city.

In summary, whether to conserve or pull down old buildings is a question that can only be answered on a case-by-case basis. People involved should carefully *weigh up* the pros and cons of new developments before reaching a conclusion.

Vocabulary:

1. lifespan=lifetime=natural life
2. deconstruct=demolish=bulldoze=knock down=pull down
3. aesthetic=artistic
4. domain=area=field
5. demolition=destruction=pulling down-knocking down
6. inflict=cause=impose
7. predecessor=forerunner=precursor
8. dilapidated=wrecked=decaying
9. pedestrian=walker=person on foot
10. renovate=refurbish=revamp:
11. blemish=damage=tarnish=spoil=ruin
12. renewed=changed=improved
13. weigh up=assess=evaluate=compare=estimate



TOPIC 30

Some people believe that new buildings should be built in traditional styles. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this opinion?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Architecture is an integral part of every single culture. *Accordingly* some people suggest that new buildings should be constructed with a classical style, in an effort to protect a nation's cultural identity. I agree with their recommendation that maintaining a nation's cultural identity is a priority.

New constructions might not only cause direct damage to those existing aged buildings, which are central to a nation's culture, but also destroy the *integrity* of the cityscape, which *characterises* a country. Over the past decades, there has been a growing recognition that architecture is an element that distinguishes one culture from another. That's why people are not surprised to see that buildings differ in styles from country to country. New constructions, if not *aligned with* the existing buildings, will impair the uniqueness of an architecture style, which has been widely recognised, studied and treasured by the world.

Another main justification for *upholding* a traditional building style is that it contributes to the diversity of building models in a country. By preserving classical architecture, some regions are marked by the *mingling* of buildings of different ages and types. Many cities in Europe can be cited as examples, where buildings in a traditional or ancient format *coexist* with modernised buildings, performing different functions and serving dissimilar purposes. It *bridges* the past and the present history, and reminds people of the heritage of a country. It creates a modern identity of a region or country as well.

Despite the role of old architecture works in retaining cultural heritage, not all the buildings should be necessarily designed and constructed in a traditional pattern. On the one hand, it is *at odds with* diversity. It comes as no surprise that, ceaseless pursuit of a classical style will result in the *sameness* of buildings in a country. On the other, traditional building models require specific craftsmanship and building materials, which are neither affordable nor accessible to every



developer, so they cannot be applied on a large scale.

From the points *enlisted* above, it seems obvious that architecture is an approach of preserving a nation's cultural heritage, so new construction should be undertaken to adhere to a traditional style. Although it might not be reflected in all buildings, it does play a great part in maintaining and reinforcing cultural identity of a region or country.

Vocabulary:

1. accordingly-therefore=hence
2. integrity=completeness=intactness
3. characterise=feature
4. aligned with=consistent with=in harmony with
5. uphold=defend=support
6. mingling=mixture=blending=combination
7. coexist=exist together
8. bridge-link-join
9. at odds with=contrary to=in opposition with
10. sameness=monotony=uniformity
11. enlist=introduce

TOPIC 31

It is more important for a building to serve its purposes than to look beautiful. Architects do not need to worry about whether it is a real work of art. Do you agree or disagree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

buildings, not very different from other commodities, perform various functions and serve varying needs of their users. At the centre of the controversy is whether the purposes of a building should be placed above its aesthetical values. As far as I am concerned, these two qualities are not conflicting, but



mutually beneficial.

In a modern society, aesthetical considerations are no longer considered as insignificant or luxury but have been *integrated* as a core function of a building. People have comprehensive requirements on a building. No longer limited to such ordinary functions, such as safety, durability, space, access to facilities, their interests involve decorative details and visual qualities, including *ornamentation* and furnishings. In simple terms, a pedestrian-looking building is *bound to mismatch* the trend of the market.

Meanwhile, it is worth mentioning that some types of buildings are broadly expected by the public to possess aesthetical values. Standard examples include restaurants, theatres, churches and so forth. A building falling in these categories desires a design of originality and *rarity*, aiming to distinguish itself from other constructions of its kind or those in its surroundings. Architects' inspirations add values to the building and increase its *marketability*. Many buildings have become *symbolic* in the city or region where they are located.

When being concerned with the aesthetic aspect of architecture, people should consider economic *feasibility*. The focus on the exterior of a building alone will lead to the increase in construction cost, making such an endeavour *unjustified*. In those cities where overpopulation continues to be a problem and many people cannot afford housing, whether a building looks beautiful would not be taken seriously. In that situation, the *rationale* is to accommodate a huge population, rather than simply please the eye.

Based on the arguments outlined above, adding visual appeals to a building is consistent with the needs of a modern society. However, it does not mean that the concern on aesthetics should be at the expense of a building's practical functions; on the contrary, a building should be the result of the *delicate* balance between the two ideals.

Vocabulary:

1. Integrate = incorporate = assimilate
2. Ornamentation = decoration = adornment
3. Bound to = set to = expected to
4. Mismatch = fail to match or suit
5. Rarity = uniqueness



6. Marketability = profit-earning ability
7. Symbolic = representative
8. Feasibility = viability
9. Unjustified = groundless
10. Rationale = underlying principle
11. Delicate = subtle = fine

TOPIC 32

Do you think a museum is to educate or entertain people?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Museums have long been known as centres of research and education. By acquiring, conserving, researching and exhibiting a great variety of tangible items (such as *artefacts* and *specimens*'), museums are of great educational value. However, this notion has been *refuted* by some people in recent years, who tend to think that museums are intended for entertainment as well. In my opinion, a museum can serve dual purposes, although education tends to play a larger part.

Museums impart knowledge to visitors through different means. One is collecting and displaying objects of scientific, artistic or historical importance at a specific site. Staff members working for museums are trained to provide interpretations of the collected objects to the general public. Viewing these items enables visitors to acquire knowledge of a given subject, such as history, art, environment and technology. History museums are for example concerned with specialised aspects of history at the local or national level. Another approach taken by a museum is to invite specialists to *lecture* regularly in different fields, which is *instructive* as well. An entertainment business, by comparison, hardly serves an educational purpose.

In addition to the way it operates, a museum is distinct from any operator in the entertainment industry in some other aspects. First of all, museums are entirely not-for-profit. Although sometimes charging an admission fee, a museum very often has free entrance, and does not engage in any profitmaking activity. It



does not target any specific audience like an entertainment business does. Instead, it is open to the general public. Museums, meanwhile, choose items on display not according to their commercial values but according to the line of items they mainly focus on. For instance, a history museum would focus only on those items that arc of historical value, although those items might not have sufficient market value.

However, a noteworthy development of museums in recent years is related to entertainment to some extent. Similar to other educational institutions, museums have to balance their budget. Many museums have therefore sought to operate more activities to attract more visitors, in order for an additional entry fee to cover costs. In addition to the traditional services, such as making collected objects available for public viewing, and organising lectures, a museum is interested in such entertainments as films, musical or dance performances, most of which are linked to the culture of its host region. Art museums, for example, bear a close *resemblance* to art galleries, in exhibiting a wide range of artworks. Museums falling in this category give visitors pleasure, and can be taken as a provider of both knowledge and entertainment.

As suggested above, there are many *benchmarks* against which a museum can be made distinct from an entertainment provider. Some museums are now providing services in *overtly* entertainment nature, although educational for the most part.

Vocabulary:

1. Artifact = ornament = manufactured article = work of art = object
2. specimen = example = sample
3. refute = contest = rebut = disprove
4. lecture = make a speech = give an address
5. instructive = informative = educational
6. resemblance = similarity = likeness = semblance
7. benchmark = standard
8. overtly = openly = clearly = obviously = explicitly



TOPIC 33

People tend to work longer hours nowadays. Working long hours has a negative effect on themselves, their families and the society, so working hours should be restricted. Do you agree or disagree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

In recent years, working hours have become a controversial issue, at a time when employees' benefits have been given serious thought. Although the extension of working hours is believed to have an impact on general well-being and result in work-family conflict and job stress, this practice is remarkably popular in many countries. I am supportive of the argument that long working hours have a negative impact upon individuals, the organisations they work for, and ultimately upon the national economy and society as a whole.

To job holders, working long hours triggers at least two problems. It is not only to damage personal relationships (with families particularly), disrupt social lives and *impede* community activities but also to cause a feeling of stress, a psychological disturbance that is experienced by many working people. It also tends to exert pressure on the employment market and make fewer employment opportunities available. Those with caring responsibilities for example, would be disadvantaged, because they are either unable or unwilling to work long hours. A high unemployment rate is always regarded as a threat to a country's economy.

To employers, long working hours, although promising maximum benefit from limited resources every now and then, have destructive effects in the long term. The primary reason is that employees tend to be less *productive*, and meanwhile, at greater risks of sickness. It would lead not only to the lower quality of work outputs but also to high turnover and absenteeism. As a result, employers have to spend much more on recruiting and training new workers. To a country as a whole, it has *chronic* effects, disabling the *optimisation* of resource use, human capital and natural resources.

Some might argue that it is reasonable for an employer to expect some



degree of flexibility during a particularly busy period, but to those employers, reliance on the jobs with extended hours has the tendency to become a regular event. *Tolerance* of this practice would allow employers to exploit labour and *disregard* the benefits that employees are entitled for, thereby posing a challenge to the legal system. It is time that employers assessed alternatives like *rescheduling*, flexible working *arrangements* and job *redesign* to explore the full potential of each employee.

As shown from the above discussion one can see no reason why working long hours is acceptable. It would lead to low productivity' and frequent sick leaves, thereby doing more harm than good to employers and the society alike.

Vocabulary:

1. impede=hold back-hinder-hamper
2. productive= fertile = yielding
3. chronic=persistent=never-ending
4. optimisation=best use
5. tolerance=forbearance
6. disregard=pay no attention to=ignore=take no notice of
7. scheduling=arrangement=preparation
8. arrangement=roster=timetable
9. redesign=re-arrangement=re-scheduling=re-organisation

TOPIC 34

What is the difference between traditional food and fast food?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Fast food has come *under fire* over the past decade, following people's growing concern on health. When people's eating habits have shown a tendency



to favour fast food, larger numbers of studies have been concentrated on its adverse impact. Below is an outline of some differences between fast food and traditional meals.

Fast food is distinguished from traditional food mainly by the selection of ingredients and *cuisines*'. As distinct from a traditional meal, which has its emphasis on diversity and *richness* of flavour, taste and choice, fast food is well-known for its high levels of salt, fat and sugar and heavy reliance on meat, such as chicken and beef. When fast foods are processed and prepared for those time-minded eaters who are eager to relieve hunger, traditional foods are diverse and *varying*. Fast foods might not vary significantly throughout a country, but traditional foods are diversified due to ethnic diversity. That's why fast foods are very often thought to have direct threats on local cuisines.

Another problem found in the regular consumption of fast food is the high risk of obesity. A typical fastfood meal has a very high energy density, much higher than a traditional meal. In many *outlets*, the choice is so limited that it's virtually impossible to select a combination of items with even a moderate energy density. Many popular fastfood menu items are unhealthy, so excessive consumption can lead to obesity. It is one of the main reasons why many fastfood chains have now incorporated healthier alternatives in their menu, c. g., salads and fresh fruit. McDonald's is a telling example.

Moreover, it is important to realise that a traditional meal has many of its cultural and social meanings. Although fast food is recognised for its convenience and saving people from the routine of home cooking, meanwhile it discourages people from preparing deliberate meals for their families and friends. People are thus less likely to spend time talking to each other. Having a traditional meal is of importance in many social situations, and can be taken as a unifying element in family life, bringing people together in times of trouble and in times of joy.

As suggested above, the fast food, although cheap and convenient, has its shortcomings and a diet high in fast foods can increase a person's risk of gaining weight and other health problems. In terms of health, its impact on cuisine, community spirits and family solidarity, the real costs of convenient foods are shockingly high.



Vocabulary:

1. under fire=embattled=under attack=debated
2. cuisine=style of cooking=cookery=knowledge of preparing good food
3. richness=diversity=variety
4. varying=changing=altering
5. outlet=store=restaurant=shop

TOPIC 35

As most people spend a major part of adult life at the place of work, job satisfaction is an important part of individual well-being. What are the factors that contribute to job satisfaction? Are all the expectations for job satisfaction realistic?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Job satisfaction refers to the degree of pleasure employees can feel when working. It is of broad interest to employers because of its potential impact on productivity and *morale* of employees. Of those factors that contribute to job satisfaction, some are *intrinsic* while others are *extrinsic*. Both will be introduced below. In the latter part of the essay is a discussion concerning whether one's expectations for job satisfaction are always appropriate.

Most of the factors that have influence on job satisfaction are extrinsic. One is employees' material needs. It is understandable that income, housing, paid holiday, bonus and other job benefits are the main elements an employee will normally look into when evaluating whether a job is desirable or not. Another source of satisfaction is job satisfaction. An employee is delighted if continued employment is accessible, that is, staying on a job for some considerable time. Besides these basic needs, people crave for a positive self-image and to have their contribution valued and appreciated. That's why promotion is very often manipulated to improve employees' job satisfaction, sending a message to employees that their commitment has been recognised.

Along with extrinsic factors, intrinsic factors are important. Individual



personality plays a large part in many cases. It is believed that the employees with a positive *outlook* on life and full of optimism are more likely to achieve higher job satisfaction *irrespective of* the job or workplace they are in. When optimism allows individuals to function well in the face of *adversity* and prevents them from becoming depressed, pessimism makes them less likely to complete tasks and meet objectives successfully, thereby undermining job satisfaction.

Given the constantly changing nature of today's business environment, a job can hardly live up to the expectations of job holders. Weak economics, rapidly changing technology and likelihood of downsizing are combining to account for why the length of *tenure* is shortened nowadays and few people now expect to stay on the same job throughout their working lives. Rewards are able to raise motivation and increase satisfaction of employees, but not available for every individual that wants them. There is no guarantee that every good performer will be awarded all the time. *Law of the jungle* applies here: only the strongest competitors will win access to the majority of the resource.

As suggested above, job satisfaction is attributed to different factors, both extrinsic and intrinsic. The complexity of today's work environment has made it less likely for people to get whatever they desire from a job.

Vocabulary:

1. morale=drive=spirits=positive feelings-confidence
2. intrinsic=inherent=basic=natural=native
3. extrinsic-extraneous
4. outlook=what is expected to happen in the future=prospect
5. irrespective of=regard less of
6. adversity=hardship=difficulty=harsh conditions=hard times
7. tenure=term
8. law of the jungle



TOPIC 36

Some people think that changing jobs periodically is good. What is your opinion?

SAMPLE ANSWER

In this fast-changing world, job-hopping (leaving the current employer for another employment opportunity) is not a rare scene. Much has been discussed about the gains and losses of such a career move. In my opinion, job-changing is an *inevitable* step in today's labour market, reflecting the nature of a modern society.

A new job implies opportunities for career development, an objective many working people intend to achieve. In general, there are two reasons behind a job holder's motive for a new job. The first is that the current job cannot make the best use of his or her abilities. The second is that he or she cannot improve skills and gain new experience. Both can lessen the possibility of a brighter job prospect.

Job-hopping, meanwhile, assists one to survive the *keen* competition. People are living in a fast - changing world and a once stable job is now *vulnerable*. Willingness to stay on the same job is no longer valued as much as before. Any employee, if *complacent* about the current employment, would be faced with threats posed by others. By comparison, taking the initiative to obtain a better job can at least drive people to increase skills and thereby improving the *chance* of continued employment.

When job-hoppers are *craving for* new chances, some issues are particularly worthy of concern. The first is adjusting to a new environment, such as working with new colleagues and supervisors. Besides, while valuing a job hopper's resume, employers too often tend to suspect his or her loyalty and *resilience*. It is therefore imperative for every potential jobseeker to learn the new employer better and evaluate the potential risk.

The above-mentioned facts give one a *glimpse* of the potential results of changing jobs. When the willingness to change a job and seize an opportunity



represents a sound career move and provides the *thrust* for self-development, it might require a job applicant's extra efforts.

Vocabulary:

1. inevitable = inescapable = unavoidable
2. keen = intense = strong = stiff
3. vulnerable = in a weak position = defenseless
4. complacent = satisfied = unworried = contented
5. chance = possibility = likelihood = prospect
6. crave for = long for = desire = yearn for
7. resilience = flexibility = resistance
8. glimpse = glance = quick look
9. thrust = driving force = impetus

TOPIC 37

What are the factors that cause stress and how to cope with stress?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Life today is filled with sources of stress, much of which cannot be avoided. When stress appears to be a *lifelong* problem to many people, how it actually *forms* remains a subject of controversy to many scientists. The objective of this essay is to outline both the sources of stress and appropriate ways of dealing with it.

Many stressors arise from people's circumstances. For example, the high-pressured and fast-paced *lifestyle* has made it unlikely for people to gain adequate leisure time. Failure to balance work and leisure causes them either to struggle with deteriorating health or to cope with psychological distress, e. g., anxiety and depression. Together with some other problems, such as disharmony



with others, *unpleasant* work or living environment, it would increase stress to an *unmanageable* level.

Another group of stressors is intertwined with personality. People *interpret* events or situations differently. A problem taken as a threat by many people might be accepted as a positive challenge to others. Evidence is inconclusive about the reasons behind this distinction, but it is widely believed that a person of a *cheerful disposition* is less likely to be heavily affected by adversity. Of equal importance is the ability to handle with some issues, such as time and money. Considering the role of personality in deciding the attitudes toward an issue and responses to an event, the effect of stress management skills actually varies from person to person.

Methods to cope with stress are many, but the most effective ones are in fact not remote or complicated but accessible and *practicable*. People under stress are advised to participate more in recreational activities, adopt a sound dieting habit, and exercise regularly. They should learn to *block out* worries and try to keep the effect of a challenge in life to a minimum. Finally, it is important to nurture a good state of mind and to perceive things positively.

As suggested above, environment factors can be taken as the sources of stress and people's personality determines the extent to which they are influenced by those factors. Adopting a healthy lifestyle and proper attitudes toward life can promote people's physical and psychological well-being and help them relieve stress.

Vocabulary:

1. lifelong=lasting=enduring=all-time
2. form=develop=take shape
3. lifestyle=way of life=daily life=everyday life
4. unpleasant=disagreeable
5. unmanageable=uncontrollable
6. interpret=understand=construe
7. cheerful=positive
8. disposition=character=temperament
9. practicable=workable
10. block out=erase=forget=wipe out



TOPIC 38

Fashion is difficult to follow, and some people argue that we should not follow it. They think that we should dress what we like and feel comfortable. Do you agree or disagree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Fashion refers to a style of clothing worn by most people of a country. The growing concern about fashion in recent years comes as no surprise, considering the fact that fashion is very often *at odds with* the traditional function of clothing, protecting wearers from the extremes of weather. In my opinion, fashion is not a betrayal but an indicative of a principle that wearing clothing is for both functional and social reasons.

Fashions are linked to personal style. Fashions allow wearers to express emotion and solidarity with other people. People dress to their mood and according to circumstances. Buying fashionable clothes is a process in which the buyer translates his or her self-esteem into a personal style. A fashion indicates one's taste, social class, likes and dislikes. It gives wearers a sense of identity and makes it possible for them to feel connected to society.

Fashions are designed and tailored to please buyers. Selecting, discussing and buying fashions can *induce* immense happiness. It has become a way of life and can be taken as a leisure activity, increasing interaction between people. With all types of images and colours, clothing is capable of giving buyers a desired look, boosting their moods and increasing their self-confidence. Fashion is about change which is necessary to keep life interesting.

Despite the enjoyment brought by fashions, people should *beware of* their ever-changing nature and the expenditure of time and money on this commitment. A fashion usually remains popular for about one or two years *at most* and then is replaced by another. Many people have been obsessed with following the current fashions *slavishly* and pursuing the clothing with promised quality and limited availability ceaselessly. Many of them are motivated to buy



outlandish clothing in a belief that they can thus keep up with fashion and their social positions are displayed.

As shown above, there is no point in *spurning* fashion. Fashion is desired in a modern society as a means of expression and a source of enjoyment, although one should reduce unnecessary spending on fashions.

Vocabulary:

1. at odds with=in opposition to=contrary to=against
2. induce=stimulate=generate=bring
3. beware of=be careful of=be cautious about=wary of
4. at most=to the maximum
5. slavishly=sequaciously
6. outlandish=bizarre=peculiar=eccentric
7. spurn=reject=snub=rebuff=scorn=disdain=despise=repulse

TOPIC 39

Discuss the reasons why people define happiness differently and how to obtain happiness?

SAMPLE ANSWER

It is always interesting to find that individuals take different views toward the nature of happiness and the access to it. As far as I know, the perception of happiness differs considerably from one individual to another as a result of the mixed effect of individual characteristics and environmental factors. These elements determine the approaches taken by different people to attain happiness.

People have different objectives to attain and different interests to pursue in a lifetime, and meanwhile, their objectives and interests vary in different life stages. One has the passion for toys as a child, fashionable clothing as a youth, an admirable occupation as an adult and possibly company of family members as an elder. With age, one's attitudes, capabilities and concerns are *subject to* change.



Following the latest *fads*, for example, appeals to young people, despite the expenditure of time and money. By comparison, senior people are hardly interested in keeping their clothes in fashion, buying trendy consumer products or changing a hair style, and moreover, tend to regard them as a wasteful use of money.

In addition to those factors that are visible, some factors are less obvious and tend to be *subjective* in influencing one's perception of happiness. These intrinsic factors include one's temperament, characters, pursuits and philosophies. Taking monetary wealth as an example, people perceive the value of money differently. Some people *sacrifice* everything in their pursuit of wealth, whereas some people take money lightly. Instead, they treasure family, friends, hobbies and philanthropy. It is also one of the reasons why people see favourable events differently (such as a marriage, a family reunion, lottery winnings, a promotion, and so forth) and react dissimilarly to troubles or bad luck, for example, accidents, conflicts, divorce, and so forth.

Considering the fact that people are all motivated to attain objectives for their happiness, they should first evaluate whether the objectives are attainable or not. High expectations for the future might bring nothing but high levels of stress and a sense of disappointment. Setting attainable objectives is a recommended alternative. Another step to be taken is giving different weight to different subjects, such as money, health, growth, fame, power and relationships. Few people can attain several objectives at a time. The key is to identify the top priority.

Vocabulary:

1. subject to=influenced by=exposed to
2. fad=fashion=trend=cult=craze
3. subjective=personal
4. sacrifice=give up=forgo



TOPIC 40

Some people think that telling the truth is not always essential. It is necessary to tell lies sometimes. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Few subjects are as likely to provoke controversy as the necessity of lying. Those who defend lying contend that truth might not be always desired, while *untruth* provides the best solutions on some occasions in the real life *context*. This argument seems *absurd* at first sight, but with some facts closely examined, one can see some strong elements lie within it.

The first *justification* for lying is that a lie is not necessarily immoral. Instead, it can be *benign* and beneficial. There are occasions in life on which people have to conceal part of the truth or even twist facts. For example, it is acceptable if one withholds a fact from a friend or family member that he or she is *diagnosed* with cancer. It is to give the patient a peaceful *frame of mind*, a condition that has a healing power. From this example, one can observe that while a falsehood is condemned by many on ethical grounds, it in fact shows sympathy and *goodwill*.

Another justification is that lying, in the broad sense, has accompanied people since the early childhood as part of the daily routine. The boundary between lies and white lies or *banter*s is blurred. Sometimes people tell a lie, or to be more precise, overstate or downplay a fact for *amusement* or other social purposes. A telling example is that people often *compliment* their friends on the food they prepare, despite the fact that the meal is not enjoyable at all. People are taught to *spare* another person's feelings, rather than speaking something straightforward that can cause discomfort or distress.

Although the preceding discussion tends to *excuse* a lie teller, it does not justify lying as an *entrenched* habit. Honesty is still being regarded as a core *virtue* in many traditions. There is little doubt that a man who is known for his candour is more likely to earn respect than a man lying habitually. A truth-telling environment is what communities are striving to establish. Lying should not be



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allowed unless it is appropriate, as it creates an ethos of *distrust*.

From what has been discussed, it is unfair to label lying as an unethical act. People's moral standing depends as much on their willingness to look after others' feelings and please others for better moods as on their adherence to truth. While telling a lie is accepted or even recommended in some situations, telling the truth is what people pursue as an honourable tradition.

Vocabulary:

1. untruth=lie= falsehood:
2. context-background-circumstance=environment
3. absurd=ridiculous=bizarre=illogical=meaningless
4. justification=reason=explanation
5. benign=kind=benevolent
6. diagnose=detect
7. frame of mind=mental condition
8. goodwill=kindness=friendliness=benevolence
9. banter = tease =joke
10. amusement=pleasure=enjoyment=laughter=delight
11. compliment=praise=pay tribute to=remark favourably on
12. spare=save
13. excuse=forgive
14. entrenched=ingrained= deep-rooted=fixed=unshakable
15. virtue=good value
16. distrust=disbelief=scepticism



TOPIC 41

Today, people are getting greedy and selfish. Some people argue that we should go back to the old days, and show respect for the family and community, so that we can make the world a better place to live in. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Perhaps the tendency toward individualism has never been clearer than it is now. People seem to become increasingly *self-centred* and snobbish. I *side with* those people who believe that reviving the *bygone* concept of family and community is important.

The rise of egoism has profound consequences on the unity of a family, causing the breakdown of family solidarity. Every component of a family can be detrimentally affected, if one member is egoistic. "Blood is thicker than water", as an old saying indicates. People will turn to family first if they are confronted with problems. People used to live in a community in which they lived according to an ethos of sharing and caring, but nowadays, members of a family tend to work separately for their individual benefits. They are ignorant of the fact that families not only give them *tangible* benefits (e. g. , financial aid), but also offer emotional support from which they *obtain* strength, comfort and confidence.

Egoism also causes people to ignore *the good of the community*, a problem that is disruptive to the community. So greedy are some people that they can go so far to engage in illegal activities. For example, some merchants can *handsome* incomes from producing *disqualified* products and *cajoling* people to buy what they do not actually need. They, meanwhile, refuse to *plough back* any fraction of their income to the community. Individuals become indifferent to others' interests and the relationship between individual members tends to become *superficial*, *transient* and *ad hoc*. People remain as *onlookers* when neighbours ask for help, and social solidarity has been dismantled in front of the overwhelming egoism.

As shown above, greedy and egoism are set to bring both the society and



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the families in grave trouble. The best way to prevent people from further loss in social solidarity and community unity is to *reconstruct* the concept of family and community, show esteem to one's family, friends, neighbours and even *acquaintances*, and recover a sense of community and social *cohesion*.

Vocabulary:

1. self-centred=selfish=egoistic
2. side with=support=back
3. bygone=past=onetime
4. tangible=touchable=concrete
5. obtain=gain=acquire
6. the good of the community
7. handsome=8\2able=considerable
8. disqualified=banned=prohibited
9. cajole=entice=wheedle
10. plough back=reinvest
11. superficial=cursory=shallow
12. transient=flccting=brieft=tcmporary=transitory=short-lived=ephemeral
13. ad hoc=unprepared=unplanned=improvised=informal
14. onlooker=bystander=watcher
15. reconstruct=rebuild=restructure
16. acquaintance=friend=colleague=associate
17. cohesion=solidarity=unity



TOPIC 42

Creative artists should be given freedom to express their ideas through words, pictures, music or films. Some people nevertheless think that the government should restrict artists' freedom of expression. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

In principle, every person has the right to communicate his or her views by any means and in any form, known as the right to freedom of expression. However, there has been a lot of debate as to whether artists should be given *unrestricted* freedom to express their thoughts through their works, such as words, pictures, music and films. I am of mixed opinions on this.

Although a citizen's freedom of speech is protected by law, artists should not be treated as ordinary citizens. Because of the wide appeal of their artworks, the artists can easily *enlist* the *empathy* of the audience and make their views *profoundly* influential over public opinion. On the other hand, freedom of speech does not automatically suggest that one has the freedom to express any opinion, make any statement and deliver any message regardless of contents. If it contains racial elements, radical views toward government, and other *objectionable* contents, the freedom should be restrained. Artists are not an exception. A good example is that in 2005, a Danish newspaper published 12 editorial cartoons that depicted an Islamic prophet, resulting in violent protests and conflicts worldwide. It shows that the arts possess the power to ruin harmony and promote *anarchy*.

Apart from artworks that cause social and political *unrest*, some other types of artworks should be censored as well. In order to increase the visual impact of their works of art, some artists introduce unusual or even offensive images, without looking after the feelings of intended audiences. Many *obscene* works appear in the *guise* of artworks, abuse graphic sexual images and expose the public to those unwelcome messages. It will pose a threat on the welfare of the audience, especially that of children. The authority should discriminate between artworks and obscene works and impose limits.

When artists should not be treated as normal people in view of their unique



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capacity to influence others, their freedom of speech should be protected to the largest extent. Undeniably, their creativity would be inhibited if they are threatened by *censorship* or prosecution. Many of their artworks might look objectionable at first sight, but over time give people different perspectives to see things. Artworks inspire people to be creative and encourage them to reflect on what happened in the world or in the immediate *vicinity*. They draw attention to particular issues, which might be otherwise ignored. By encouraging critical and reflective thinking, an artist contributes to addressing social and political issues.

According to the above discussion, people can come to a conclusion that artists are entitled to freedom of speech, although some of the artworks should be thoroughly examined before being made available to the public. It would minimise the risk of causing chaos and discomfort in society—a negative consequence of the unlimited freedom of artists.

Vocabulary:

1. unrestricted=unhindered-unobstructed=unlimited
2. enlist= procure
3. empathy=compassion=understanding=sympathy
4. profound=great=intense
5. objectionable=offensive=unacceptable=horrible=unpleasant
6. anarchy=disorder=chaos=anarchism=lawlessness
7. unrest=turbulence=turmoil=disorder
8. obscene=filthy=bawdy
9. guise=disguise
10. censorship=restriction=suppression
11. vicinity=surrounding area=neighbourhood



TOPIC 43

The advance of science and technology has a significant impact on people, but the role of artists is also important, such as musicians, painters and writers. What can the arts tell US about life that science cannot?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Unarguably, the improvement in people's living standard owes much to technical advances, which are driven by science. So important is science that the functions of art are contested by many people. I believe that the arts can convey some messages that science can never be able to convey.

The arts represent human thoughts, whereas science represents natural order. In other words, the arts lead people to *perceive* the world while science is aimed at discovering the nature of things. What has been found true in science would hardly alter, unless sufficient evidence can be cited to challenge or *overrule* the established theories and principles. By comparison, what has been conveyed by a work of art is neither right nor wrong, and can be given different meanings by different people. Science sometimes treats a new theory as an *erratic* and stresses *conforming to* existing rules and pursuing accuracy. Science is about exploring the *undiscovered* but existing, in contrast to the arts, which are interested in exploring both the undiscovered and the *nonexistent*. In simple terms, the arts encourage individuality and creativity, whereas science respects conformance.

Another major distinction is that the arts draw attention to issues that are unique in a particular society, while science attaches importance to the issues that are of interest to mankind as a whole. Contrary to popular belief, artwork does not necessarily aesthetically appeal to a majority of viewers. An artist's primary motive is not only to pursue the aesthetic in the popular mind but also to remind people something that they cannot afford to ignore, such as environment, religion, politics, morality, and so forth. A scientific breakthrough, by comparison, brings benefits that can be shared by the whole human society, but not unique in any specific community.



The arts also give people a sense of cultural background and identity, as a key component of any culture in the world. By contrast, technology and science are uniform to people, regardless of nationality, race and *ethnicity*. Art has long been a way of passing ideas, concepts, beliefs, values and ways of seeing things to later generations. Because of art, people can be classified into different social and cultural groups.

In conclusion, the arts differ from science in many aspects and because of it, people know more about the world in which they live and get an insight into the society, culture and themselves. While science is objective and based on *predetermined* guides, art is inherent in the human mind and subjective.

Vocabulary:

1. perceive=see=recognise=consider
2. overrule=reject=cancel=annul
3. erratic=irregular=unusual
4. conform to=adhere to=obey=cling to=stick to
5. undiscovered=unnoticed=overlooked=ignored
6. nonexistent=missing=fictional=imaginary=conceived
7. ethnicity=the ethnic group one belongs to
8. predetermined=preset=fixed=determined

TOPIC 44

The government should control the amount of violence in films and on television in order to control violent crimes in society. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this action?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Because of their *prevalence*, televisions and films are among those media that are believed to potentially affect, change or mould people's thoughts and



behaviours. Media watchdogs suggest that some programmes should be censored so as to curb violence. It is necessary, for the link between violence in media and violence in society is evident.

First of all, violent movies promote heroism and individualism, cajoling people to resolve conflicts through violence, rather than legal *consultation*. Some action movies have conveyed a notion to the audience, especially teenagers, that a hero can be highly regarded, regardless of the consequence of his behaviour. Audiences imitate those *role models*, in a belief that their behaviour will reap *applause* from others, *in most cases*, their actions evolve into violent crimes.

Another category of programmes, war documentaries or crime reports, also opens up the possibility of viewers engaging in violence. Aiming at a high *audience rating*, TV programme producers are inclined to broadcast crime reports. Some reports can go so far as to present the whole procedure of a law-offending practice, such as robbery', shoplifting, burglary, to mention but a few. Not surprisingly, it functions like a free course from which *prospective* criminals learn those skills. It contributes to the rise in crime rates and then to the increase in violence that is involved in different kinds of crimes.

As well as those TV shows, action movies have a profound impact on personality development of viewers, leading to their subsequent violent acts. Dominant entertainment media succeed in attracting millions of young viewers every single day. The audience can easily become addicted to TV programmes and tend to be isolated, *temperamental* and aggressive. They use foul language and employ violence when feeling depressed or *estranged*. There is no point in denying the fact that the TV is the chief culprit for these emotional disturbances and erratic behaviour patterns.

To summarise, the violence in movies or on television can impact audiences in a variety of ways, and eventually lead to crimes. Therefore, the government should take actions to tackle such a problem and censorship is undoubtedly one of the most effective means.

Vocabulary:

1. Prevalence = popularity = pervasiveness
2. Consultation = discussion = talk



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3. Role model = model = example = exemplar
4. Applause = praise = approval = support
5. In most cases = most of the time = in general = more often than not
6. Audience rating
7. Prospective = potential
8. Temperamental = volatile = moody
9. Estranged = alienated = separated

TOPIC 45

Some people suggest that there should be restrictions on a detailed description of crimes in the newspapers and on television. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

The violent contents broadcasted by the mass media (the television and the printing press in particular) have been *singled out* in recent years as a matter of urgent public concern. It has been argued that a detailed description of crime, especially violent crime, should be restricted. I agree on this suggestion based on the following concerns.

There can be little doubt that a complete description of crimes has a direct impact on viewers' perception of crime, including its nature and impacts. Ongoing exposure to reports on crime scenes has desensitised viewers to the *horrors* of serious crimes such as homicide. Many TV programmes tend to *dramatise* the process of tracing criminals. So *immersed* are viewers *in* the storyline that few are encouraged to link the crime to a brutal, *unsympathetic* and devastating act. Meanwhile, hardly has any newspaper or TV editor carried out a *follow-up* study of



convicting criminals. This form of *representation* fails to alert viewers to the fact that no criminal can stay *at large* and all offenders will be brought to justice.

Meanwhile, the depiction of violence is potentially the primary cause of "copycat" suicides, fights, shootings and bombings. People are inclined to vent their discontent in various ways, and one of the most common is violence. The documentary on a criminal or violent act provides them with role models, those characters who initiate most of the acts of violence on television. The portrayal of those characters encourages viewers to emulate violent behaviour, believing that their acts are likely to be acknowledged,

Despite its enormous effects on the audience, the description of crimes on television or newspapers should not be made a scapegoat for all social violence. It would divert people's attention from the root causes of violence. Some depictions of violence are likely to contribute to harmful effects on viewers, whereas other portrayals may be pro-social and beneficial for the audience. For example, many programmes encourage non-violent alternatives to solutions. Similarly, television and newspapers have played a significant role in educating the audience about the advantages of building a non-violence community and the *inadvisability* of excessive drinking, car racing, drug using and other *unlawful* acts.

As suggested above, media violence, including the detailed picturing of violent acts, contributes at least partly to social violence and to the audience's aggressive thoughts and behaviour. However, there is no simple cause-and-effect relationship between media violence and societal violence and both have multiple causes.

Vocabulary:

1. single out=select=highlight
2. horror=terror
3. dramatise=sensationalise=exaggerate=overstate
4. immersed in=absorbed in=engrossed by=captivated by
5. unsympathetic=uncaring=indifferent=cruel
6. follow-up=subsequent=following
7. convict=sentence=find somebody guilty



8. representation=portrayal=description=account
9. at large=free=at liberty
10. inadvisability=inappropriateness=unsuitability
11. unlawful=illegitimate=illegal=illicit

TOPIC 46

We can get knowledge from news, but some people think we cannot trust journalists. What do you think? What qualities do you think a successful journalist should have?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Today, it is important to note that the public has a growing *appetite for* different content areas of news, including national, local, entertainment, sports, politics, weather and traffic news. With news becoming increasingly important, public attention has been brought to the *credibility* of journalists. In my opinion, it would be over-simplistic to say that journalists can convey all messages to the audience without distorting them.

Not surprisingly, whenever people *talk of* journalism, objectivity is the first word that *springs* to mind. Reporters are generally expected to disclose all facts and uncover all sides of an issue without introducing any bias, as opposed to commentators, who are allowed to provide personal opinions. However, in reality, objectivity is hard to achieve. Journalists have to *succumb to* either commercial or political pressure, distorting facts and misleading the public. In many countries, news organisations are controlled entirely by powerful political parties and *enjoined* to disregard the truth and disseminate information that guides public opinions.

Another factor contributing to the erosion of journalistic standards throughout the news business is that in these years, increasing *weight* has been given to following news values, entertainment, *oddity* and celebrity. To cater for



the tastes of wider audiences, journalists can go so far as to twist the facts, fabricate news and spread *rumours*. Many news media have a clear preference on media personalities and use their public appeal to increase viewing rates, giving these publicities, who hardly remain *neutral*, numerous opportunities to express their opinions publicly on a subject in which they have a personal stake or *bias*. It is thus fair to say that news is now less *trustworthy*.

In general, a successful journalist should be first able to use careful judgement when organising and reporting information. Determination and persistence are required when journalists ought to defend the freedom of the press and ordinary citizens' right to know the truth, despite being under different forms of pressure. In addition, they should be sensitive to and interested in current affairs at all levels. In acting as successful communicators and information senders, journalists should also have a good command of language skills and a real knowledge of different cultures, countries, races and social groups.

As shown above, people have reasons to suspect the creditability of a journalist. Either as a medium that deliberately affects the public interest or as a form of entertainment that does not attach much importance to *seriousness*, journalism has failed to maintain objectivity and live up to *ideals* of journalistic responsibility. Without showing respect to freedom of express and conveying messages accurately and promptly to the public, one cannot be *acclaimed* as a qualified journalist.

Vocabulary:

1. appetite for=hunger for=craving for=desire for
2. creditability=reputation
3. talk of=consider=discuss=talk about=talk over
4. spring=bounce=bound
5. succumb to=yield to=give way to=surrender to
6. enjoin=instruct=command=direct
7. weight=importance=significance=emphasis=stress
8. oddity=peculiarity=quirk



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9. rumour=gossip=anecdote
10. neutral=unbiased=impartial=disinterested=dispassionate
11. bias-prejudice=preconception=preconceived notion
12. trustworthy=dependable= honest=reliable
13. seriousness=solemnity-gravity
14. ideal=principle
15. acclaim=praise=approve=commend

TOPIC 47

People think that the news media has influenced people's lives nowadays and it is a negative development. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

For many people, news is a regular part of life. An issue in dispute is whether the massive influence of the news media on people's daily lives *denotes* a negative development. It is my view that news media does more good than harm to the society.

The news media provides people with much of the information they need on a timely basis, although there are claims that it reports on issues and events purposely (only selecting those events that interest the audience). Anecdotal evidence shows that people from all walks of life have the habit of collecting information regularly from the news media, including print, broadcast and Internet-based media. Information assists people in decision making. For example, the Free Trade Agreement reached by the Chinese government and its New Zealand counterpart might open up many opportunities to both countries. For any business person, either in New Zealand or in China, failing to recognise



and *capitalise on* this *impending* change would cause a costly loss.

Meanwhile it should be recognised that the news media can sometimes save lives and reduce *casualties*. There is a lot of uncertainty about the *surroundings*, and people are susceptible to the damage caused by accidents, crimes and natural *calamity*. The news media conveys the *firsthand* information to concerned audiences and enable them to take *corresponding* actions right away. The authority can declare a state of emergency when it is necessary, organise evacuation and distribute aid to the needy areas. All these efforts count on the news media as the *messenger*.

Despite their significant and ongoing contribution to the society, the news media might sometimes be harmful to society. It is a convention that the news media exaggerates the *magnitude* of the real threat (for example, the potential of a terrorist attack), in order to draw the attention of the desired audiences and in pursuit of high audience ratings. It ends up with causing panic among the population. Meanwhile, the news media tends to emphasise some issues or events, which virtually have little relevance to people's daily lives, such as an occasional multiple vehicle accident, an affair that a celebrity is involved with, and the like. It distracts the audience from something that is much more noteworthy, for instance, poverty, environmental problems, to name but a few.

In summary, the role of news media as an information provider should be acknowledged. In case of emergency, it acts as a lifesaver. However, it is not to say that the news media can give people an overall view of the problems in society all the time.

Vocabulary:

1. denote=indicate=symbolise=represent=signify
2. capitalise on=take advantage of=make the best of
3. impending=imminent=forthcoming=coming=approaching
4. casualty=fatality=victim
5. surroundings=environs
6. calamity=misfortune=catastrophe=disaster
7. firsthand=immediate
8. corresponding=relevant



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9. messenger=courier

10. magnitude=scale=enormity=level

TOPIC 48

There are many advertisements directed at children. Parents argue that children are misled, while advertisers consider advertising a source of useful information. What is your opinion?

SAMPLE ANSWER

The impacts of advertising on children have become an area of focus in these years. When the initial purpose of advertising is to *disseminate* information related to goods and services, many parents have associated it with their children's unjustified desires to buy something unnecessary. Although the extent to which advertising influences young viewers is a matter of debate, its impact, in my opinion, is *undisputed*.

One of the main features of advertisements is giving products an exaggerated account. In addition to this *tactic*, advertisers tend to stress those *attributes* of a product that are likely to be valued by young consumers, while *playing down* others. Some advertisements might disclose detailed information about products (such as health hazards of overeating some types of food), but in most cases, such information appears normally in small print and children cannot read them clearly. Nor can children comprehend the messages with their literacy skills. As a result, young viewers are susceptible to the effects of a commercial, leading directly to their subsequent buying decisions or their *thrust* for buying.

Another main strategy adopted by advertisers is to associate products with lifestyles that are attractive to young people and deliver a strong message that the advertised products are what their peers want and will choose. Children are more concerned with a particular *label* and branded products than adults, for the simple reason that they are much less price sensitive. They have the desire to possess products they consider popular, fashionable and likely to be admired by their



peers, but seldom take into consideration the functions and practical values of those products.

When the negative impacts of advertising on children are acknowledged, it should be noted that as children grow up, they will make more sophisticated judgements about those tactics advertisers use to grab their attention. They are less *receptive to* advertising messages and meanwhile more likely to perceive advertising as a mere source of information, assisting them to learn products and services better. Meanwhile, some advertisements are non-commercial and provide information on such issues as anti-smoking, anti-drug, AIDS, healthy eating practices, and so forth. In this sense, it is premature to judge that advertising has no *redeeming feature*.

To summarise, by enhancing the image of advertised products, making exaggerated claims on products and services and portraying a fantastic way of life, advertising is liable for children's impulsive purchases. Children are *misguided* to make a purchase. Although adolescents are less susceptible to the misleading information, the advertisements that are marketed to children should be restricted.

Vocabulary:

1. disseminate=broadcast=publish=spread=present=circulate
2. undisputed=acknowledged=undeniable=unquestionable
3. tactic=approach=scheme=ploy
4. attribute=feature=trait=characteristic=property=quality
5. play down=make light of=underplay=talk down
6. thrust=driving force=drive=impetus
7. label=brand-brand name=trademark
8. receptive to=tolerant of=open to=accessible to
9. redeeming feature=advantage=strength=merit
10. misguide=mislead=deceive=induce



TOPIC 49

Do the positive effects outweigh negative effects, when advertising gains in popularity?

SAMPLE ANSWER

It has always been difficult to assess the contribution of advertising. This issue is *fraught with* controversy, with concern being expressed over the harmful effects of arguments against this concern.

It is important to recognise that one of the key functions of advertising is to supply consumers with adequate and accurate information about all of the alternatives available to them. Every now and then, advertising is criticised on the ground that it can *manipulate* consumers to follow the *will* of the advertiser; however, evidence supports an opposing view that advertising merely promotes products that are most likely to satisfy consumers' wants. In simple terms, it is consumers rather than advertisers who decide what are advertised.

Advertising also plays a significant role in *fostering* full employment and facilitating economic well-being. By conveying marketing information constantly to the target audience, advertising speeds the consumers' acceptance of new goods and technologies. It guarantees the high turnover rate of the manufactured goods and therefore, sustainability of a business. It is also agreed that advertising is one of the main sponsors of a large number of other industries, for example, the entertainment industry—particularly sports, music, and theatrical events.

Unarguably, advertising is criticised every now and then for misleading the public. However, the rapid development of advertising itself has provided a solution to this problem, as the information delivered to the audiences has made them knowledgeable consumers. Under this circumstance, they can easily distinguish *inferior* products from quality products with their knowledge. The misleading effect of advertising will be counteracted over time.

To summarise, advertising suggests what consumers need and contributes partly to economic development. In this sense, advertising is of great value to people and the society. The general perception of advertising as a source of



misleading information is in fact a bias.

Vocabulary:

1. fraught with=full of=filled with=burdened with
2. manipulate=maneuver=operate=influence=harness
3. will=want=wish=desire
4. foster=promote=further=advance=encourage
5. inferior=substandard=low-grade

TOPIC 50

Some people argue that advertising is discouraging people from being different individuals, and makes people to be or seem to be the same. Do you agree or disagree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Perhaps no subject in the world is as likely to cause so much controversy as advertising docs. One of the main criticisms against advertising is that it *erases* individual's sense of identity and causes them to buy the same product. This view has *flaws*.

By *tempting* messages and *persuasive* arguments, advertising can draw the attention of the audience, but not necessarily stimulate the sales. It is clear that consumers rarely rely on advertising as a single source of information before deciding what to buy. Instead, they use *multiple* information sources that are *complementary*, such as family, friends, *inspections*, and so forth. It is oversimplistic to say that advertising plays a decisive role. Most of the time, there are a range of factors a consumer would take into account, including their income levels, circumstances, and so forth. For instance, when it comes to luxury goods, only a limited number of consumers respond with a final purchase. Therefore, however persuasive an advertisement is, never can it lead to the viewers making the same purchase.

Meanwhile, consumers have low *tolerance* for sameness. There is much



uncertainty about the preference of consumers nowadays, primarily because they have easy access to information. An existing brand is vulnerable to any new entrant. Brand loyalty is something of the past, and the rise and fall of a brand is abrupt. Even if brand preference is established because of advertising, there is no assurance it will be maintained. It seems to be an entrenched tendency of consumers to try different products. The main reason behind the high unpredictability of consumer behaviour is unclear, but it is certain that consumers will not buy the same product.

However, people should meanwhile admit that advertising has every now and then contributed to consumers' *unplanned* purchase. Banners, signs, flags and other visuals, for example, turn *unintended* shoppers successfully into impulsive buyers in their *mundane* shopping trip. Another function of advertising is to make people live in a world of fantasy, in which they consider themselves prettier, slimmer, richer and more outstanding. Advertising also succeeds in creating peer effect. It is not unusual that one buys something *on impulse* without knowing much about the product but merely assuming that his or her peers are using it.

As suggested above, individual's reactions to advertisements and preferences on a brand are inherently complex and unpredictable, simple cause-and-effect conclusions are *elusive*. Despite boosting the sales of a product or service, advertising can hardly make any product or service dominate the market.

Vocabulary:

1. erase=wipe out=remove
2. flaw=defect=fault
3. tempting=alluring=enticing
4. persuasive=influential=convincing
5. multiple=various=a compound of
6. complementary=balancing=matching
7. inspection=examination=assessment=observation
8. tolerance=acceptance
9. unplanned=impulsive
10. unintended=unintentional



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11. mundane=dull=everyday=routine=dreary=boring
12. on impulse=on the spur of the moment= on a whim-impulsively
13. elusive=vague=indefinable=obscure

TOPIC 51

The high sales of popular consumer goods reflect the power of advertising but not the real need of the society where such products are sold. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Advertising is well-known as a method *of promotion*, a method used by corporations to introduce their products and services to the market, attract the eye of consumers and increase sales. Critics of advertising argue that advertising is the main drive of soaring sales of some products and services, inducing consumers to purchase what they do not actually need in their daily lives, This contention is self-evident.

Advertisements conquer the audience mainly by sending them a message that they are lacking a specific brand or product that is likely to make them acceptable or even distinguished individuals in society. The advertisements as to medicine, *dietary supplement* and other life-enhancing products provide a typical example. *Targeting* the buyers that are doubtful or worried about health, advertisers have sought to encourage them to think that they are threatened by such problems as malnutrition, dysfunction of any part of their bodies. Lack of the knowledge in this field, the audience will *rush* to buy the advertised products. Such cases are *ever-present*, and the audience expects an immediate positive outcome —*disregarding* other solutions.

Advertising also works to create a best-seller image for a newly-marketed product. The audience is *tempted* to buy it in the hope that they can thus become



one of the *eyewitnesses* and participants of a fad. It is not uncommon that cell phone users replace their phones every year, although the phone they have abandoned is still *in usable conditions*. They might not actually need to make purchases so frequently, but advertising spurs them to do so. The power of advertising has too often abused by advertisers, who tend to *give an exaggerated account of* the popularity of a product, soon after the product is marketed. So *gullible* are some buyers that they are driven to buy it. With the number of buyers growing, it will evolve into a buying *craze*.

In conclusion, people should stay *alert* to the influence advertising has on their decision making process. As indicated above, advertising has twisted the information about what product is needed, or what product is favoured, thereby driving people to make insensible buying decisions.

Vocabulary:

1. promotion=advertising=marketing
2. dietary supplement-pills to improve health
3. target= aim at
4. rush=hurry=dash=run
5. ever-present=omnipresent=ubiquitous=pervasive
6. disregard=pay no attention to=ignore=take no notice of-close the eyes to
7. tempt=attract=entice=lure
8. eyewitness=witness=observer
9. in usable conditions=in working conditions=in serviceable conditions
10. give an exaggerated account of=exaggerate
11. gullible=credulous
12. craze=fad=trend=fashion=obsession
13. alert=attentive=watchful=vigilant



TOPIC 52

Advertising encourages customers to buy in quantity not in quality. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Living in the information age, people are bombarded with substantial daily *doses* of advertising in multiple media. The argument that advertising, with its overwhelming power, leads to consumers' impulsive purchase has been accepted by more and more people. Consumers are encouraged by advertisements to purchase products in quantity without paying heed to quality. This *allegation* is *flawed*, as far as I am concerned.

The first fact to note is that despite the strength of advertising, viewers remain as decision makers. They gather information from advertisements based on their own interest. While some people focus on quality, others are concerned with price. Likewise, advertisements *stress* different aspects of a product, either quality or price, which is determined by contexts. Consumers are now *desensitised to* the information delivered by commercials and become increasingly cautious. Quality is, in most cases, a primary concern to them. Even those most loyal users of advertising are now *concentrated on* product quality, believing that neither pricing nor advertising is an effective facilitator of sales and consumers' satisfaction with quality is the key to repeat purchases.

Price is perhaps an *inducement* used by marketers to trigger sales, but other elements, such as product package, functions, after-sales service and warrantee, appear to gain in importance. Advertising informs people of more choices, allowing them to make a buying decision according to their needs and favour a product for different reasons, either quality or price cuts. Needless to say, people have become more *circumspect* than ever before and more prone to the *interaction* of other factors, such as the advice of their friends, past experience, current knowledge and physiological state.

It is also necessary to draw a line between the concept of marketing and that of advertising. Advertising alone is not able to contribute high sales and the



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link between advertising and product usage is in fact not clear. In its broadest sense, advertising is merely a means of generating demand in society by offering specific information on a product or service in a persuasive format. It is similar to sales promotion, package sales, low-pricing strategy and other marketing techniques. Advertising simply conveys the message relating to price, rather than creating this message.

The facts outlined above, when taken together, are in favour of a view that consumers take in the information delivered by an advertisement differently, and they are influenced by a variety of factors and driven by forces in a decision making process. Quality is of concern to them in most cases, instead of price.

Vocabulary:

1. dose=quantity=amount
2. allegation=claim
3. flawed=faulty=blemished
4. stress=emphasise=underline=underscore=accentuate
5. desensitised to=indifferent to-uninterested in
6. concentrate on=focuse on=be conscious of=be immersed in
7. inducement^ stimulus
8. circumspect=cautious=prudent=careful
9. interaction=interplay



TOPIC 53

Some industrialised countries have serious environmental problems. The damage to the environment is an inevitable result when a country tends to improve the standard of living. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

A question central to today's environmental debate is how economic development and environmental protection *interrelate*. Some people maintain that no economic target can be attained without some sacrifice made to the environment. As far as I know, there are a couple of *complementary* components, if *operated* properly.

For businesses, large or small, taking environmental consequences seriously can *impel* them to improve their production lines, make optimal use of materials and resources and increase the profit margin. For instance, the adoption of environmentally friendly equipment can reduce waste, minimise pollution, and *decelerate* the depreciation rate of machinery. Meanwhile, it can reduce businesses' expenditure in *compliance* with environmental standards. The third merit is boosting *loyalty* of employees, who have an appreciation for the safety and comfort of their working environment.

By adhering to environmental standards, industries will also make a favorable impression on their clients, build up word of mouth *reputation* and trigger sales. Some large industries in the past, when asked to take actions to make their production less environment-damaging, were worried about the proportional rise in operational costs. Their attitudes are now subject to *modification*, as the expense of improving equipment is temporary, and can be *paid off* by *forthcoming* profits. Customers are keen on products made from an environmentally conscious business, in a belief that its products are free of pollutants.

When businesses have become more profitable, more money will be available for *revamping* the environment. *Probing* the core of environment-related



issues, one can observe that people are more likely to consider the possibility of incorporating environmentally friendly practices when enough funds have been raised and alternative livelihoods have been explored. Illegal logging, for example, *centralises* in underdeveloped countries every year, where people are unable to find jobs. *In comparison*, economically-developed countries show more willingness to invest in forest conservation, as their industries rely less on natural resources and have become service-oriented.

To summaries, economic development and environmental protection are not *inimical*, but complementary. They are inextricably *intertwined*, and can be promoted simultaneously.

Vocabulary:

1. interrelate=correlate=interconnect
2. complementary=paired
3. operate=manipulate=manoeuvre
4. impel=compel=urge=drive
5. decelerate=slow
6. compliance=observance
7. loyalty=allegiance=faithfulness
8. reputation=fame
9. modification=transformation=change=alternation
10. pay off=recompense=reimburse
11. forthcoming=imminent=impending=approaching
12. revamp=mend=repair=restore
13. probe=look into=investigate
14. centralise=concentrate
15. in comparison=by comparison=by contrast
16. inimical=contradictory=at odds=conflicting
17. intertwine=interlink=interweave=interconnect



TOPIC 54

Environmental problems are serious in many countries. It means that the only possible way to protect the environment is at an international level. To what extent do you agree or disagree on this hypothesis?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Globally, environmental degradation has been recognised as one of the mam challenges that people have to overcome in the 21st century. The rapid deterioration of environment is believed to impose a severe *threat* on people's survival *in the years ahead*, if not solved effectively. In addressing this issue, countries worldwide should join forces and make a concerted effort, instead of working individually for inconsistent targets.

The first point to support international cooperation is that the impact of an environmental problem can be *on the global scale*. Common knowledge is that people live in a global environment and share natural resources and survive on the same biosphere. The *interdependencies* of ecosystems and the transport of pollutants arc the main characteristics of the World. For instance, a stream or lake in a country can be affected by pesticides *released* from neighboring croplands, lawns and gardens and by pollutants emitted thousands of miles away. Likewise, the depletion of a natural resource (such as deforestation) in one nation can have environmental and economic *ramifications* in many other countries.

Another benefit obtained horn international cooperation is facilitating the exchange of goods, technology, know-how' and capital. It is crucial to *hammering out* the best and quickest solution to the problem. Environmental problems are mainly found in *underdeveloped countries*, where industrial or agricultural developments are placed ahead of environmental protection. With a clear *intent* to *restore* the damaged environment, those countries have difficulties in *making headway, in the absence of* facilities or technologies. They need the support from the global community, especially those industrialised countries that have



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achieved remarkable progress in this field. By sharing experience in environmental management, countries can tackle problems with greater efficiency and at lower costs.

To summarise, cooperation between countries is inevitable in this global campaign, not only because the ecosystem is a unified mechanism but also because international engagement can make optimal use of financial and human resources. By collaborating with each other, countries are able to protect the global environment with using the least amount of resources.

Vocabulary:

1. threat=danger=risk
2. in the years ahead= in the years to come
3. on the global scale= at the international level
4. interdependency=interaction=interplay=mutual dependence
5. release=emit=discharge=dump=dispose
6. ramification=consequence=result
7. hammer out=arrive at=work out
8. underdeveloped countries=developing countries=countries in a backward state
9. intent=intention=purpose=aim
10. restore=repair=revamp
11. make headway=make progress
12. in the absence of=lacking=without



TOPIC 55

Some people believe that air travel should be restricted because it causes serious pollution and will use up the world's resources. Do you agree or disagree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

The issue of the impact of air travel on the environment has heated up in recent years, following the concern that more and more people *turn to* it as a means of travel. Restrictions have been preferably imposed on air travel, according to some people. There are some points in their argument.

The first is that aircrafts have been responsible for a large proportion of air pollution. Planes, either *idling* or taxiing, contribute a large proportion of local emission annually. Some might suggest that air is the only suitable mode of transport for long distance trips. This viewpoint is fallacious. Trains, for instance, serve as an *optimal* alternative, consuming less energy and causing less pollution.

As well as air pollution, aircrafts can cause noise pollution. Although it is difficult to measure the actual impact of noise on people's everyday lives, its ability to increase the anxiety and levels of annoyance has been *confirmed*. Especially to those living in the neighbourhood of an airport and around the night paths, noise created by aircrafts is indeed a headache.

Although travelling by air is likely to cause problems, it is not to say that air travel should be significantly restricted. Alternatively, air travel can be operated in a manner that its strengths can be fully taken advantage of. For example, by replacing old engines with cleaner ones, people can *mitigate* the environmental impact caused by flying. Meanwhile, aircrafts have a higher capacity, allowing greater numbers of passengers for each flight and thereby giving the best possible values to the fuel used.

In the light of the facts outlined above, substantial thought should be given to the problem of pollution caused by aircrafts. However, it does not automatically mean that air travel should be curtailed. Instead, people should make adjustments



and improvements wherever appropriate to ensure the optimal use of *form of travel*.

Vocabulary:

1. turn to=resort to=rely on
2. idle=stay unused=remain redundant
3. optimal=best=most favourable
4. confirm=verify=prove true
5. mitigate=alleviate=ease=lessen=soften
6. form of travel=means of travel=mode of travel

TOPIC 56

It is said that the best way to solve the world's environmental problems is to increase the price of fuel. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

The burning of fossil fuels is universally recognised as the largest source of emissions of greenhouse gases in the world and one of the key factors responsible for global warming. When there is a glowing concern about the destructive effects of global warming and other environmental problems, some people argue that the best approach to deal with such problems is to increase fuel prices, assuming that it will lead directly to the drop in car use. This approach is productive to some extent, but some other measures should be given equal consideration.

It should be first noted that car use alone does not *take up* the entire consumption of petrol, although people's *obsession with* car use contributes



greatly to greenhouse gas emission. Petrol is intended for other applications too, such as electricity generation, the daily running of equipment and machinery for industrial and agricultural purposes. People are not surprised to see that the appliances used by many families are powered by petrol as well. Therefore, when it comes to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, people should take different methods simultaneously, instead of relying on any single method only.

People should meanwhile recognise the fact that the demand for petrol is generally *inelastic*, at least in the short run. The consumption of petrol would not vary significantly according to the fluctuation of petrol price. To such a high degree have people relied on petrol in their daily lives that they cannot cut petrol use immediately. Some people might argue that using public transport is an alternative, but notably, public transport itself is a large producer of carbon dioxide. Going on foot or by bike is clean, but not preferred by many people, who are extremely time conscious.

Therefore, the effort to reduce greenhouse gases emission by curbing car use cannot achieve any immediate outcome unless sufficient time is given. Over a period of years, petrol consumption is very likely to drop, when households realise that fuels represent an increasing proportion of expenditure. People might turn to fuel-efficient cars or reduce non-essential trips, both resulting in the drop in petrol use. Car manufacturers are forced to enlarge research and development investment in producing hybrid cars or cars powered by renewable clean energy sources, a *cure-all* for car emission problems.

In conclusion, imposing petrol tax is neither the main nor the only solution to environmental problems that people are struggling to solve, although the utilisation of fossil fuels, particularly petrol, is the largest source of emissions. Some other methods should be taken into consideration as well.

Vocabulary:

1. take up=occupy=make up=constitute=account for
2. obsession with=fascination with=passion for
3. inelastic=unchangeable=fixed
4. cure-all=panacea=universal remedy=solution



TOPIC 57

Water resources around the world are falling deficient. Analyse the possible reasons and provide your suggestions.

SAMPLE ANSWER

Access to water is *vital* to every living creature on the planet. Despite the fact that approximately two thirds of the earth surface is covered with all forms of water bodies, countries worldwide are faced with different levels of water shortages. Some reasons can be cited to explain the emergence of this problem.

A trigger for a water crisis is people's lack of knowledge of the value of water. Given the ready availability of water in many countries, people tend to believe that the reserve of water in the world is infinite. Notwithstanding the increased expenditure on water supply, water is perceived as a cheap commodity by many families. Many people see water as a *perpetual* resource. For this reason, the *unbridled* use of water is commonplace, accelerating the exhaustion of this valuable resource.

Rapid population growth is another force contributing to the water crisis. Not only does it reduce the amount of water available for manufacture, farming and households, but also has a profound effect on the sustainability of *aquatic* ecosystems. Massive urban and industrial growth fuels unprecedented demands, often at the expense of aquatic ecosystems. Many water resources are not *replenished* before being re-used and *depleted*

Human-induced pollution is worthy of concern as well, a factor regarded by many as the root cause of the rapid loss of drinkable water. The untreated discharge of various pollutants such as heavy metals, organic *toxins*, oils and solids in water bodies is believed to have severe impacts. Industrialisation, meanwhile, results in *abnormal* climate and biological destruction. While some areas have become *barren*, other areas are hit by floods. Floods *ravage* everything, including reservoirs, dams and canals. The water supply problem will intensify.



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As noted above, the steady loss of water is attributable to inappropriate usage, population growth and pollution. In order to tackle the above-mentioned problems, one can adopt various approaches, besides the existing strategies, such as restoration of ecosystems, rainwater harvest. New technologies can help ease water shortages, by tackling pollution and making used water recyclable. In agriculture, water use can be made far more efficient by introducing new farming techniques (e.g., drip irrigation). Drought-resistant plants can help cut the amount of water needed.

Vocabulary:

1. vital=crucial=essential=central=critical
2. perpetual=eternal=everlasting
3. unbridled=unchecked=uncontrolled = uninhibited
4. aquatic=water-related
5. replenish=refill
6. deplete=reduce=exhaust=use up=drain
7. toxin =contaminant= pollutant =poison=noxious waste
8. abnormal=non-standard = unusual
9. barren=arid=unproductive=infertile=dry=waterless
10. ravage=ruin=damage



TOPIC 58

Many people believe that the human society has developed into a throwaway society, which is filled with plastic bags and rubbish. What are the causes and solutions?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Although waste disposal does not grab a headline as frequently as many other environmental issues do, it does not mean that it is less serious. As a matter of fact, the treatment of *garbage* continues to be a problem worldwide. Despite its sizable influence, many citizens have not yet realised the seriousness of this issue. It is the goal of this article to outline the potential causes of this problem and suggest possible solutions.

People should first recognise that the increment in garbage is a natural result of the social and economic development. *Unethical* businesses are the main *creators* of industrial waste, including heavy metal, chemicals, plastic, and other durable and non-recyclable materials. People's *quest* for a better standard of living gives them incentives to manufacture a rich variety of consumer goods and disregard the potential impact on environment. This practice can date back to the *earliest days* of industrial revolution, producing enormous waste that are unable to be *recycled* and causing an environmental disaster.

Another potential reason for the slow progress in waste treatment is people's low *awareness* of the opportunities to reduce, reuse and recycle waste. Many people do not have a firm *stand* against over- consumption and excessive production of disposable items. Besides, many citizens are not environmentally conscious, disposing of wastes whenever and wherever they consider convenient. Meanwhile, many manufacturers tend to use *virgin materials*, rather than recyclable materials in the course of production. That's why many communities are facing a particularly difficult position in waste treatment.

The best approach to address waste issues is simply to minimise its generation. It is primarily because the more waste people produce, the more



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waste they have to cope with. Waste recycling offers another means, although it requires the spontaneous commitment of both businesses and citizens. Additionally, laws should be *set out* to regulate corporation behaviour and make their operation environmentally friendly.

It is clear that the problem of waste disposal exists due to people's ever-growing demand for manufactured goods and slow response to the impact of this problem on the environment. Tackling this problem depends not only on individual's effort to keep the waste to a minimum but also on businesses' attempt to optimise their manufacture and reduce the *inputs*.

Vocabulary:

1. Garbage=refuse=waste=rubbish
2. unethical=immoral
3. creator=maker
4. quest=pursuit
5. earliest days=outset =start=onset
6. recycle=reuse
7. awareness=consciousness
8. stand=stance=position
9. virgin material=raw material
10. set out=lay out=enforce
11. input=resources used



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TOPIC 59

Food can be produced much more cheaply today because of improved fertilisers and better machinery. However, some of the methods used to do this may be dangerous to human health and may have negative effects on local communities. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Fertilisers and machinery used to be welcomed by countries worldwide as essential elements of industrialised farming, a landmark in the history of global agriculture. However, because of being used on a large scale worldwide, they have caused heated controversy. There is ongoing debate on the possible damages of industrial farming caused to the environment and *humanity*. In my opinion, both are still *irreplaceable*, although efficient and scientific utilisation is highly recommended.

Fertilisers and machinery are both essential in increasing crop yields, a solution to *starvation* throughout the world. In history, manual work *accounted for* the majority of farming, from sowing, irrigating to harvesting. The slow pace of human labour made it impossible to produce enough crops to feed populations. Farming is, on the other hand, exposed to the influence of many elements—weather conditions, soil compositions, pests or some *unpredictable* events like natural disasters. Fertilisers enhance crops or other foods' resistance to external disturbances, while machinery saves manpower by finishing the major part of the work. The yield is raised to the highest, and lands are used to the hilt. Enough food can be produced to meet the market need now, despite the continued growth of the population.

Some people *defy* fertilisers and machinery because of their concern on environment. However, this *notion* has been challenged by advances in this area of knowledge. Technological innovation has made machinery more environmentally friendly, and many machines used for farming purposes are now able to operate without generating much waste. Fertilisers, by comparison, are much less environment-damaging. Most fertilisers are organic and free of



ingredients incompatible with the environment. Nor do they have *deleterious* effects on people's health.

Despite what has been discussed, farmers should beware of over-application of fertilisers. From an environmental perspective, fertilisers and machinery should be classified and used with caution. The over-application of fertilisers not only has perpetually *disastrous* effects on farms but also injures the neighbouring ecosystem. Many scientific studies suggest that a long history of fertiliser use can significantly reduce land fertility. Other consequences include poisoning all wildlife feeding on farm crops (e.g., birds), and polluting the neighbouring water bodies. On health and safety grounds, fertilisers might bring remediless damage to eaters' health, for some chemicals, although not fatal themselves, might become life-threatening when accumulating inside eaters' bodies.

On the basis of the above-mentioned arguments, people are convinced that the sustainable supply of foods still *rests on* fertilisers and machinery, and the key is to use them properly and in moderation.

Vocabulary:

1. humanity=human race=humankind=people
2. irreplaceable=unique=inimitable=matchless
3. starvation=hunger=food crisis=food shortage
4. account for=explain=justify=give an explanation for
5. unpredictable=random=irregular
6. defy=boldly resist=boldly reject=act against
7. notion=concept=perception=thought=opinion:
8. deleterious=detrimental=life-damaging=life-threatening
9. disastrous=devastating=ruinous=catastrophic
10. rest on=hinge on=depend on=rely on=count on



TOPIC 60

Some people hold that we should spend money and time on the protection of wild animals while others suggest that the money should be spent on populations living in the poorest areas of the world. What is your opinion?

SAMPLE ANSWER

In these years, animal protection has become a subject of ongoing scientific research and an issue of concern. People take different views toward the enormous spending required by wildlife conservation. It is suggested that the spending should be *diverted* to helping human populations, especially those living below poverty line, because human life is more valuable than animal life. In my opinion, the investment in animal conservation is *worthwhile*.

Animals, as a significant part of an ecosystem, have profound impacts on the sustainability of an ecosystem and on the well-being of humanity. All animals are connected in one way or another in food chains. For this reason, the demise of a species can lead to overpopulation or under population of another species and then put this species at the verge of extinction. The natural balance will be disrupted and the ecosystem cannot be sustained. It would disable vegetation from *purifying* water, recycling nutrient and *pollinating* crops. We humans are eventually affected.

Another justification for animal protection is that animals play a significant role in the development of industries, as an important natural resource. People derive substances and materials from animals for different purposes. A typical example is that animals provide essential substances for drug-making. It is also very common that designers and engineers turn to wildlife for inspiration. For instance, the invention of *water-proof* clothing drew upon the research on sharks.

On account of those benefits, wildlife protection is a significant strategy that has far-reaching effects on the future of human. However, when implemented, this strategy should be adapted in different contexts. It should be noted that spending money simply on animals is not the approach that promises the best outcomes in all circumstances. For example, in those regions where



inhabitants struggle with weak economies and have few job sources, direct spending on any animal program would not stop people from hunting and trading animals for a living. An alternative strategy is creating jobs or providing subsidies, lifting these regions out of poverty'.

From what has been discussed, animals are key components of the whole natural order and have relevance to the sustainability of an ecosystem and the interests of humanity. Animal protection is a strategy that applies to the whole world, and might vary in different circumstances.

Vocabulary:

1. divert=switch=redirect
2. worthwhile = worthy
3. purify=cleanse=decontaminate
4. pollinate=fertilise
5. water-proof=water-resistant=rainproof=watertight=impermeable

TOPIC 61

Some people strongly oppose animal experimentation, believing that it causes pain to animals, while some other people consider it necessary. What is your opinion?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Perhaps no subject in the moral community is as controversial as animal testing. Animals, many people believe, *merit* more humane treatment. When animal-based experiments have long been the Centre of criticism, I am of the opinion that such experiments are essential to both the well-being of human



beings and that of animals.

There is little doubt, first of all, that most of the animal-based experiments are conducted for the development of technology and to date, there is little chance of finding satisfying *substitutions* for animals. Animals are used mainly because they bear a close *resemblance* to humans, either in behaviour or in cell structure. They respond to external disturbances (such as electrical shock) nearly in the same manner as humans do. There is much evidence that most of what people know about themselves, including pain, stress, reproduction and nutrition, is based on findings of animal-based experiments. Animal testing proves one of the main approaches to predict the risk when drugs or other products are used on humans.

Another fact to support animal-based experiment is that animals are not the *equivalent* of humans, and can be used as resources for human purposes. Animals have no *capacity* to recognise the rights of other species. Nor will they take in consideration the interests of other species. It is possibly one of the main reasons why animals *feed on* each other. Humans, by comparison, use animal experimentations not only for their own interests but also for the interests of animals. For example, some medical discoveries can be used by veterinary surgeons to give medical care and treatment to sick animals.

Despite the justifications given for vivisection, researchers have the obligation to reduce animal testing and animal suffering. There is a growing recognition that animal tests are mostly done for commercial purposes and most of them are avoidable. For instance, the cosmetic industry has been exploiting animal experimentation simply for diversifying products and maximising profits. The fewer cosmetic products people use, the fewer animals they have to *slaughter*. When scientists are empowered to carry out cruel experiments like vivisection, such powers should not be abused.

To summarise, one can subscribe to the notion that animals can be taken as resources intended for the benefit of humans, although meanwhile it is certain that suffering should be controlled to the minimum during experimentation.

Vocabulary:

1. merit=deserve
2. substitution=replacement



3. resemblance=sameness=similarity
4. equivalent=counterpart
5. capacity=ability=capability=competence=aptitude=power
6. feed on=eat=survive on
7. slaughter=kill=massacre=slay=butcher

TOPIC 62

Far too little has been done to prevent animals and plants from dying out, although people have noticed this problem for a long time. Why have people failed to improve this situation? What are your suggestions?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Nowadays, the progressive *extinction* of living species on the planet—either animals or plants—has arisen as a big environmental challenge, according to many scientists and researchers. Despite the growing concern on this issue, little progress has been made in this field. There are some factors that account for why this has happened. In my opinion, this situation can be remedied, provided that some reasonable steps are taken.

The sharp fall in living species is first attributed to people's continued and heavy reliance on them for their own interests. An age-old tradition is that animals are raised, *bred* and *fed* for human use. For example, laboratory animals, working animals and sport animals have been used for economic reasons or to fulfill different tasks throughout much of human history. The meat of *rare animals* is regarded as a delicacy in some countries, for example, whale meat in Japan. When it comes to plants, over-logging, over-grazing and soil erosion are the root causes of the *dwindling* vegetation. *Over-Utilisation* of living species has made many animals and plants face extinction risk.

Another reason cited to explain this is that few people take the mass extinction of species seriously. For example, fur is desired and pursued as a



fashionable status symbol in many countries, even in those countries where people are known for their environmental concern, such as New Zealand, Canada and Australia. Barely have buyers realised that their purchase decisions will encourage the fur business to further animal slaughter. Rainforest destruction is another example. Despite strong opposition to lumber harvesting, this problem continues simply because people have an ever-growing appetite for land to live on (such as buying luxury properties in the country) and wood products to consume (such as furniture). Humans' pursuit of comfort and enjoyment has long been justified and *condoned*, even though the pursuit is at the expense of other species on the planet.

From what has been discussed, it is clear that lack of awareness and over-reliance on natural resources are the main reasons why species are being pushed closer to the *brink* of extinction. Humane education represents a long-term commitment and will help raise a generation that has a real knowledge of environment protection and stays alert to the risk of animal exploitation and ecological degradation. In addition, it is imperative to carefully measure and control any activity that is likely to pose a threat on the survival of species. Decision makers and individual citizens alike should take into consideration the impacts of their decisions and behaviours on living species. It is important to realise that preservation of living species is not *sentimental*, but essential to the well-being of humankind.

Vocabulary:

1. extinction=death=loss=disappearance=annihilation
2. breed = reproduce
3. feed=give food to=nourish=raise=bring up
4. rare animal=exotic animal=endangered animal=threatened species
5. dwindle=shrink=decline=disappear
6. over-utilisation = excessive use = over- exploitation
7. condone=forgive=disregard=ignore=overlook=excuse=pardon
8. brink=verge
9. sentimental=emotional=unrealistic



TOPIC 63

Some people think that killing animals for food is cruel, but others claim that animals are a necessary part of diet. What's your opinion?

SAMPLE ANSWER

It is a widespread practice that livestock is raised and *butchered* for human consumption. Although it has been condemned as cruelty to animals, a counter-argument is that meat is the necessity for people's health and well-being. To the best of my knowledge, meat is a regular part of the diet and there is no alternative to animal food sources.

The first justification is that animal source foods provide a wide range of *nutrients* that are difficult to obtain in adequate quantities from plant source foods. Insufficient intake of those nutrients will produce negative health outcomes, such as poor growth. A diet with a good combination of meat and vegetable is thought to have considerable value. Some might argue that consumption of meat can pose health risks and increase the risk of foodborne illness. This statement is fallacious, considering the fact that people can kill *bacteria* and remove risk factors by cooking properly and using scientific methods in manufacture.

Another point to note is that most of the meat available in supermarkets for people's consumption is produced by industrial agriculture. In view of the intense use of modern technology and mass production techniques, the produced livestock, *poultry* or fish cannot be taken as ordinary animals but only as manufactured goods. By making use of *economies of scale* to produce enough food at an affordable cost, industrial farming is essential to addressing food supply problems.

The significance of capitalising on animals as a food source is therefore undeniable, but it is important to realise that people cannot exploit animals and become addicted to meat consumption. Animal fats, for example, increase the risk of heart disease and meat is frequently associated with *outbreaks* of food



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poisoning. Meanwhile, people's *insatiable* desire for meat might lead to intensive livestock fanning and animal slaughter, which has a direct impact on the well-being of animals worldwide.

From the *preceding* discussion, one can see no reason why livestock or some other animals cannot be used as food. Switching to an animal free diet is a personal option, but the question remains whether one can ensure sufficient intake of nutrition necessary for one's health. When there is little room for argument concerning the use of animals for meal, it is necessary to impose standards and prevent animal exploitation.

Vocabulary:

1. butcher=kill for meat=cut for meat
2. nutrient=life-enhancing substance=nutrition
3. bacteria=microbe=microorganism=germ:
4. poultry=fowl=livestock:
5. economics of scale=cost-effective advantages=advantages obtained from mass production
6. outbreak=occurrence=outburst
7. insatiable=avid=greedy=voracious=ravenous
8. preceding=previous=earlier=above



TOPIC 64

Discuss the arguments for and against raising pets.

SAMPLE ANSWER

In these years, animal welfare has become a subject of controversy and it has been argued that animals should not be regarded as property' by human beings or used against their own best interests. When pet raising has become a way of life in many societies around the world, it has, on the other hand, raised the question of whether it is a breach of animal rights. Below are some arguments concerning pet ownership.

Pet animals are known for their loyalty and *playful* characteristics and believed to have a positive effect on the health of their owners. The pressures of modern lifestyles are tremendous. Compared to previous generations, people are more likely to live independently and away from their families at the present time. Adopting a pet animal as a companion can give quality to the owner's life, and help reduce stress and blood pressure. It is also regarded as a solution to the feeling of isolation and loneliness. These two facts are combined to justify why there are an increasing number of people now depending on pet animals as companions or even a *therapy*.

Raising pets benefits pets as well. Providing *companionship* and giving pleasure to their owners, pets receive loving care and attention in return. Some might argue that holding a pet is *unnatural*, because pet animals would lose their original way of life. However, people should meanwhile recognise that some animals are *unfitted* to the wild environment. It is morally wrong that people force animals to struggle with food, clean water and other necessities in the wild environment.

Keeping an animal is therefore beneficial, but, notably, there is no guarantee that every pet lives a happy life. Ignorance of an animal's needs for space, exercise or contact with members of the same species, for instance, has been found as a common problem with raising pets. It should also be noted that



many people adopt pets for wrong reasons, such as a statement of affluence or a status symbol. They are very likely to abandon or even kill pets when their initial interest subsides. When holding pet animals has become popular, other problems will result, e. g. , pollution caused by excess *manure*.

Based on the facts outlined above, people can conclude that pet-keeping is a tradition that can be either good or bad, from an ethical point of view. On the one hand, it gives people companionship and great pleasure and animals obtain a loving home and a happy life. On the other, inappropriate treatment can *rob animals of the* basic right to well-being.

Vocabulary:

1. playful=lively=animated
2. therapy=cure=remedy=treatment
3. companionship= company
4. unnatural=abnormal=aberrant=deviant
5. unfitted=unsuitable=incompatible with=incongruous with
6. manure=dung
7. rob sb. of=deprive off = take from

TOPIC 65

Good facilities can be found in cities but not in the countryside. Therefore, new doctors and teachers should be sent to the countryside. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Poor facilities have been found as a common sight of rural areas. To improve this situation, some suggest that new doctors and teachers should be *assigned* with tasks in the countryside, but not in urban areas. There are some



strong arguments for this suggested solution.

The first is that hospitals, clinics and schools are severely understaffed in rural areas, compared with their overstuffed counterparts in the city. The imbalance of resource and staff has chronic effects on the well-being of rural people. Lack of education or medication has made them among the most disadvantaged in a country. Allocating new doctors and teachers to those areas can at least provide a temporary solution. Besides, it helps address the issue of distributing the graduates from medical school and normal college, with filling those *vacancies* for *physicians* and teachers in rural communities.

To the doctors or teachers that graduate freshly with a degree only, working in rural areas enables them to enrich work experience within the shortest possible period of time. Opportunities are scarce in the city, where numerous candidates are in the race for a single position. The chance of raising standards through practice is so *meagre* that it will over time hamper rural practitioners' career development and make them uncompetitive in a skill-based society. Facility shortage to many doctors in the country is an opportunity, instead of a challenge. They are in a position to rely more on clinical skills than on sophisticated equipment. For teachers, they teach with few teaching aids. All contribute to the increment of their skills.

Despite those benefits, the place of work should be chosen by doctors or teachers themselves and compulsory assortment is not justifiable. It is not ethical to stop the desire of individuals for a more satisfying quality of life. Needless to say working in rural areas has many issues to address, working conditions, transport and housing. For this reason, those graduates who volunteer to take rural employment deserve a better pay as a recognition of their contribution and also as an incentive.

From what has been discussed, working for a period of time in the country can benefit new teachers and doctors alike with increasing their work experience and meanwhile, address the service shortage facing those areas. However, the voluntary sign-up should be guaranteed, instead of compulsory assignment.

Vocabulary:



1. assign-appoint-send-a | locale
2. vacancy=position=post=job opportunity
3. physician=doctor=general practitioner=surgeon
4. meagre=scanty=slim
5. recognition=acknowledgement=appreciation=respect
6. incentive=motivation=encouragement=inducement

TOPIC 66

Some findings have revealed that cities around the world are growing large. Could you outline the possible causes and predict consequences?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Of those issues that have concerned the government, academics and the public throughout the world, urban sprawl is one of the most prominent. There are conflicting views toward this growing trend. While it has been taken as a positive development in many newly emerging cities, it is increasingly perceived as a threat to rural environment and considered as a trigger for numerous urban problems. The objective of this essay is to evaluate the forces behind this trend and its consequences.

Population growth is widely recognised as the primary reason. The room in the city centre is so limited that it fails to provide enough housing to accommodate an ever-growing population. Another problem that has intensified in the inner city is infrastructure shortage and poor conditions of buildings. Lack of *amenities*, such as water and electricity supply, waste *disposal*, sewage *treatment*, *to name but a few*, has left no choice to urban dwellers but to resettle in the suburbs, where they have easier access to new facilities.

City dwellers are not always moving outward unwillingly. The continued increase in household incomes gives *renewed impetus* to urban development.



People nowadays have higher expectations for *quality of life* and a growing appetite for lower-density housing with a larger open space. It is possibly the main reason why the *real estate* market has its focus now on the *outskirts* of the city, but not on the Centre. *In the meantime*, the affordability and *ubiquity* of car ownership has made transport a less serious concern for those living in suburbs. They can *commute* daily between the place of work and the place of residence *with ease*.

The sustained expansion of cities will make a *marked* impact on the society in several dimensions. The high traffic volume between suburbs and urban areas would cause severe air pollution and reduce the lands suitable for farming. Urban sprawl requires large developments, causing areas to lose some of their unique qualities and characteristics. From the economic perspective, the relocation of a high population in suburbs will pose adverse fiscal impacts on the local government in infrastructure construction. To those who used to live in suburbs, the *inflow* of new *inhabitants* would *damage* the community spirit and make relations between neighbours fragile.

Urban sprawl is, therefore, a trend which has a strong effect on the environment, communities and government budgeting. When urban decay and citizens' desire for higher standard of living make this trend *irreversible*, the emphasis should be placed on planned and sustainable development.

Vocabulary:

1. amenity=facility=service
2. disposal=clearance
3. treatment-handling-dealing
4. to name but a few=to mention but a few-and so on=and so forth
5. renewed=new:
6. impetus=momentum=thrust=drive=force
7. quality of life=living standard = the level of comfort and wealth
8. real estate=property=housing:
9. outskirts=suburb=the periphery of a city
10. in the meantime=meanwhile
11. ubiquity=prevalence=popularity



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12. commute=go back and forth
13. with ease=easily=effortlessly=without much effort=without difficulty:
14. marked=noticeable=distinct=manifest
15. inflow=influx=arrival:
16. inhabitant=dweller=citizen=resident
17. damage=injure
18. irreversible=unalterable

TOPIC 67

The only way to improve road safety is to impose severe punishment for driving offences. Do you agree or disagree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Road safety has long been an issue of concern to the public, and to the government. Nothing qualifies as a sufficient compensation when a road accident occurs. Despite the *painstaking* effort to reduce death, injury and *trauma* across the world, many countries are seeing traffic accidents increase *exponentially*, fit improving road safety, some people advocate *harsh* punishment. In my opinion, it is merely one of the many *countermeasures* and cannot prevent all criminal offences on the road.

In many cases, many automobile accidents occur not because drivers belittle or defy road regulations but because those regulations are unfamiliar to them. It is an everyday occurrence that rule-breaking acts and traffic crashes are linked to poor driving skills. Many drivers have limited experience in coping with different situations and an inaccurate estimation of the complexity of road conditions, despite having passed licence tests. It alerts people to the *loopholes*



in policies, such as the loose control over car use, low requirements on driving training and low licence standards. In tackling those problems, it is imperative to require licence applicants to attend more safe-driving courses and pass strict tests.

Resides education, other endeavours, such as improving road infrastructure and transportation systems, are equally important. Road conditions should be improved to allow different users, including drivers, cyclists and pedestrians, to use roads safely. Other facilities, such as stoplights and stop signs, can be used wherever appropriate to curb speed driving. Furthermore, authorities can *sponsor* the research for road safety measures and effective precautions, such as identifying risk factors of different driving patterns. By translating these findings into policies and practices, the government is in a stronger position to protect vehicle occupants and *vulnerable* road users.

Wider intervention of local authorities is also recommended, such as increasing patrols in those areas where accident rate is high. Road regulations should be reassessed and revised regularly so as to combat road offences more effectively. When the existing policies fail to regulate road users' behaviour, *tightening* the control is preferred. However, as suggested before, strict standards require full *compliance*. Without regulations closely observed, standards are in fact *vain*.

It can therefore be made clear that punishment is not the only way to cut the accident rate and improve people's safety on road. Some other measures, such as increasing road users' knowledge of rules and defence driving skills, improving road infrastructure and enforcing compliance with standards, are all important.

Vocabulary:

1. painstaking=diligent=careful=conscientious
2. trauma=suffering=pain
3. exponentially=dramatically=markedly
4. harsh=unsympathetic=unforgiving=severe=strict
5. countermeasure=preventive measure/action=precaution
6. loophole=mistake=escape=dodge



7. besides=apart from=aside from
8. sponsor=fund=subsidise=support
9. vulnerable=defenseless=susceptible
10. tighten-increase-boost
11. compliance-conforming
12. vain=worthless=futile=ineffective

TOPIC 68

Police in Britain do not carry guns. Some people believe that unarmed police are unable to protect citizens, but some suggest that arming the police will *lead to a surge* in violence in society. Discuss those two views.

SAMPLE ANSWER

Whether to arm the police is a contentious subject. While some people maintain that unarmed police are unable to protect law-abiding citizens, others reject this notion, believing that it leads to a drop in violence in society. There are several factors that account for the stark contrast between the two thoughts.

The primary concern on armed police is that it would increase the potential for miscarriages of justice and *mistaken* shootings of innocent civilians. The legislation in many countries is supportive of this concern. Laws protect citizens from torture or cruel treatment and also their rights on arrest or detainment. If armed, the police will be less likely to think twice before pulling the trigger. They can easily get away with private *execution* by inventing a legitimate excuse, such as self-defense. The chance of a shoot-out would naturally rise, causing many *preventable* injuries or losses of life.

Arming the police might also *add fuel to* the gun culture. Nowadays, perhaps nothing is worse than the continued rise in the gun ownership rate. Arming the police can never *redress* the imbalance but worse, give criminals a



motivator to carry guns even for minor crimes. On the other hand, in those communities that are otherwise peaceful, armed police are *intimidating* and the fear of crime will spread wildly. It would lead to further demand on private gun ownership, and expose members of the public to higher risk.

Arming police is therefore not advisable in most cases but only allowed in exceptional circumstances. For example, in those areas where armed crimes are rampant, armed police protect not only the public but also themselves from the potential attack. It gives the police the leverage in their combat against criminals, especially those hardened criminals. Firearms also serve as a *deterrent* to *would-be* offenders. If street patrols in some neighbourhoods are routinely armed, it helps cut the rates of crime.

The access to weapons should therefore be limited, for the simple reason that carrying guns leads to higher likelihood of mistaken shootings and to higher levels of violence. Carrying guns is only accepted when the police are in conflict situations and confrontations with criminals.

Vocabulary:

1. mistaken=incorrect
2. execution=the death sentence=killing=capital punishment
3. preventable=unnecessary=avoidable
4. add fuel to=fuel=invigorate=encourage
5. redress=restore=remedy
6. motivator=incentive=impetus
7. intimidating=daunting=frightening=scary
8. deterrent=warning
9. would-be=possible=likely=prospective=potential



TOPIC 69

Do you think it is better to send criminals to jail or let them receive education or job training?

SAMPLE ANSWER

In the public mind, a prison is a place to keep those who have done wicked things in captivity, in order that they will not *contaminate* law-abiding citizens. However, there is a growing concern in these years that imprisonment is a less effective form of punishment, and some alternatives seem to promise more satisfying outcomes. I agree on this proposed change, with evidence that imprisonment can be merely taken as the last *resort*

Education is of critical importance to *rehabilitating* an *offender*. It first changes delinquents' attitudes toward society and family, a *prerequisite* to their *reintegration* into the community. It meanwhile allows them to keep in contact with the community, an opportunity that prisoners are normally deprived of. With the passing of time, they lose confidence and the ability to function prosocially. The risk of re-offending is thus higher. The third benefit is preventing offenders' peer group effect, because by receiving education in a proper learning environment, offenders have lower chance of reinforcing each other's antisocial and criminal behaviours in group situations.

Similar to education, work is one of the most important interventions in corrections, whether it takes the form of work release or vocational training. Money is the main *inducement* of many crimes, such as shoplifting, robbery, burglary, and so forth. Job training enables offenders to acquire earning capacity and improve job skills. By this they can become productive members of society and have the opportunity to behave normally towards family or occupation or society. Greater post-release employment success will, in general, lead to a lower rate of recidivism.

However, to those habitual criminals, who have committed crimes repeatedly and show little respect for the legal system, education and job training might not make any significant difference. This category of offenders gives little



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thought to their past or future. Their behaviours and thoughts are deeply *ingrained* and *unbending*, in which circumstance imprisonment is the best way of keeping them from being *perpetrators*. Meanwhile, imprisonment has deterrent effects and can deter potential offenders from becoming actual offenders.

To sum up, it is clear that the results of imprisonment can be mixed and it is only effective in restricting those who are very likely to commit repeated acts of violence. By contrast, education and vocational training suit those who committed less serious crimes, preventing them from becoming reoffenders after release and assisting them to reorganise their lives.

Vocabulary:

1. contaminate=taint=infect=influence
2. resort=alternative=option=choice
3. rehabilitate=restore=mend=re-establish=reshape=remould
4. offender=lawbreaker=delinquent
5. prerequisite=requirement = precondition
6. reintegration=blending
7. inducement=incentive=enticement
8. ingrained=embedded=deep-rooted=fixed
9. unbending=fixed=unyielding
10. perpetrator=criminal



TOPIC 70

Many people are afraid of leaving their houses because of the spread of crimes. Some think that more actions can be taken to prevent crime from occurring, but others think little can be done. What is your opinion?

SAMPLE ANSWER

The rise in the crime rate in the past decades *has fuelled* public worries about the rapidly declining safety of their communities. Some people take the *position* that little can be done to prevent themselves from *victimisation*. As opposed to this general pessimism, many people, however, maintain that in *combating* crime, people should adopt a proactive approach. I *side with* both of them.

The first point to support this is that the government can increase intervention, including launching anti-crime public campaigns, enforcing new laws, and providing education. A civilised society' is *characterised* by a high literacy rate and a low crime rate. Tire negative relationship between these two *parameters* implies that one will be away from a life of Clime if given the access to education. Another method relies on the *combination of* imposing *tougher* laws and training a more effective police force. Not only does it penalise those offenders but it also deters prospective criminals. Moreover, the government can capitalise on the mass media throughout the country to alert the public to the threat of crime and teach citizens self-defence techniques.

For individual citizens, many crimes can be *nipped in the bud*, if they keep *vigilant* at crimes and are brave enough to fight back. It is particularly true in cases where burglars break into houses without an alarm system, and shoplifters target those shops that are not under the surveillance of security camera. In simple terms, it is people's negligence that causes them to fall prey to the criminals. On other occasions, criminals are *pampered* by people's *cowardice*. If they possessed courage to chase criminals or at least report to the police on a crime,



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there would be fewer victims.

To tackle crime, as indicated above, requires the commitment of nearly all members of society, from the government to ordinary citizens. Although there might not be a great deal one can do to prevent crimes from occurring, it is not entirely helpless. Solutions exist somewhere always, but wait to be found and practiced.

Vocabulary:

1. fuel=increase=invigorate=stimulate
2. position=stance=attitude=opinion=view
3. victimisation=persecution
4. combat=fight-struggle with
5. side with=agree with=support=be in sb. 's camp
6. characterise=typify
7. parameter=factor
8. combination=mixture
9. tough=strict=rigid=stringent
10. nip crimes in the bud
11. vigilant=watchful=wary=alert= cautious=attentive
12. pamper-spoil:
13. cowardice=spinelessness



TOPIC 71

There are more and more effective security measures in large cities to reduce the crime. Does this endeavour bring more benefits than problems?

SAMPLE ANSWER

In these years, the society has seen rapid proliferation of different measures aiming to prevent victimisation. It is followed by a *protracted* debate over its positive and negative impacts. In my opinion, it is a reflection of the *inflated* fear of crime, but not of actual levels of crime.

To a larger or lesser extent, the increased presence of anti-crime devices fuels the fear of crime and has a *devastating* effect on people's quality of life. Crimes are concentrated in particular areas, but the fear of crime spreads across the whole community and affects nearly every resident. The most annoying aspect of this trend is that people's freedom is *curtailed* (for example, using the stairway of a building less frequently due to the alarm installed there) and sometimes, people's privacy is invaded (due to the concealed surveillance cameras in offices). There is little, if any, evidence that the threat people perceive has a real life counterpart.

On the other hand, although some measures are said to deter or stop crime, they too often produce opposite outcomes. For example, lighting in a dark area may reduce fear but also enable criminals to see their targets more easily, leading to a high probability of attacks. The benefits of *self-protective* measures such as gun ownership and martial arts training are doubtful because nobody can say with certainty that the net effect is to decrease harm. Most personal defensive devices are either too difficult to use or less effective than expected.

Crime reduction and crime prevention also rely on other approaches rather than on security measures. Criminals choose their targets based on time and whereabouts. Citizens will be less vulnerable to victimisation if they bypass those places where crimes frequently occur. There is no need for carrying chemical agents for self-defense. Many mansions are armed with expensive in-door surveillance systems, but issuing passes to occupants and tenants and



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preventing easy access to the building is more effective and economical. In the inner city, where crimes are epidemic, eliminating the dilapidated buildings used by criminals for hiding or selecting a target is more useful than requiring all shops and residents nearby to install expensive security system. The central part of crime prevention is altering the environment, by which the root causes or at least the facilitators of crime can be eliminated.

As suggested above, It is difficult to measure the effectiveness of anti-crime equipment and users should examine it regularly. The crime prevention framework should focus on making the environment safe from crime, reducing the potential for crime in high-risk situations and *halting* the possibility of future Clime.

Vocabulary:

1. protract=prolong
2. inflated=increased=escalating
3. devastating=destructive=harmful=damaging=dreadful
4. curtail=limit=restrict=restrain=inhibit=curb=reduce
5. self-protective=self-defensive
6. halt=stop=freeze

TOPIC 72

With the ageing of society, we are now beginning to see a growing interest in further abolishment of mandatory retirement. Do you think that mandatory retirement is obsolete or should be sustained?

SAMPLE ANSWER



Mandatory retirement is a prominent issue raised by the continued expansion of the aged population. The notion that the older people should be forced out of employment because of age is set to become obsolete. However, the *paradox* is that a fixed retirement age is still being widely adopted by many employers as usual, either overtly or impliedly. My opinion is that the ways people look at older people as a section of the workforce should be subject to *modification*, in a world where the growth of the ageing population is a clear trend.

Due to improved diet, higher incomes and medical advances, people nowadays live longer. The ongoing increase in the *life expectancy* leads to the subsequent extension of working lives. It comes as no surprise that productivity and intellectual ability of workers would remain the same as they approach age 65 and in the years beyond. Meanwhile, older employees have a wealth of experience and specialised knowledge they have obtained throughout their decades-long working lives. All stand them in good stead, despite their slightly reduced physical abilities. The age prejudice is therefore unjustified, causing businesses to lose a major source of expert personnel.

Another disadvantage of mandatory retirement is the difficulty in finding qualified replacements for senior employees who have retired. Contrary to popular belief, senior employees are unlikely to *impede* promoting young employees. Instead, they ensure the consistency of staff training of an organisation. Many senior employees are willing to stay on the junior jobs and earn less when they reach retirement age. Besides, their leadership is essential to the improvement of younger employees' skills. With senior employees, a corporation guarantees the diversity of perspectives and minimises the risk of relying on *impetuous* decisions made by young, inexperienced employees.

Despite those justifications for longer working lives, working in later life might not be *aligned with* the interest of all older people. For blue-collar workers, their choice is very limited. They are either forced out because of ill health or tired of working days and nights. In many instances, despite being able to work, the majority of senior people prefer retirement, or at least working shorter hours. Income has failed to be an effective incentive, compared to being part of society and contributing to the society in later life. For this reason, retirement should be made a voluntary option to the senior.



Based on the above-mentioned arguments, one can conclude that the changing demographics have lent support to raising the age of retirement or just abolishing mandatory retirement. It is in line with the extended life expectancy and in employers' favour, although it is up to older people themselves in deciding whether to retire or not.

Vocabulary:

1. paradox=contradictory aspect:
2. modification=adjustment=adaptation=alteration
3. life expectancy=Lifespan
4. impede=obstruct=hinder=hamper=hold back
5. impetuous=impulsive=reckless=heedless
6. aligned with=in line with

TOPIC 73

In many countries, the proportion of older people is increasing steadily. Do you think it is a positive or negative change to the society?

SAMPLE ANSWER

In many countries, the trends toward fewer children and more senior citizens are proceeding at an accelerated pace. A long and healthy old age was previously a cause for celebration, but now viewed as a 'burden on society'. As far as I see, fears that problems will arise from an ageing population are *unfounded*.

People tend to believe that the ageing of a society leads to slower growth of population size and to a shrinking workforce. The *dominant* way of looking at an older society has been to see this as a problem—an increasing burden on the



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working population. The fad is that as the number of young people falls, organisations will find it harder to recruit from their traditional pool of school-leavers and graduates. To tackle this problem, an increasing number of sectors and companies are now *desperate* to keep then highly experienced older workers. Therefore, an ageing population will by no means constitute a problem because older people should work at or beyond retirement age. Nor will it lead to a crisis of labour.

Another widespread worry is the sufficiency of wealth available in society to sustain the retired population. Paradoxically, when people are concerned about the public expenditure on the retired population, they have ignored private transfers of time and money from the old generation to the young one. It is important to note that parents' earning capacity grows nowadays because of having fewer children. The total time they spend caring for dependents drops, and they are thus *released* for productive work. When they reach retirement age, they are in a stronger position with better financial security. In later years their children should receive an adequate *inheritance*, assisting them in turn to achieve a comfortable retirement.

In addition to establishing a solid financial base for families, older people also have time to offer for other benefits of family and those of the community. Healthy and energetic, they are the *backbone* of voluntary services. Voluntary services are not *worthless* just because they are unpaid. Senior workers can provide families or voluntary organisations with legal, accounting, computer or other skills for free.

As suggested above, (he fear that people will suffer from the "burden" of too many elderly people is unreasonable. Any issue that arises from having a larger, older and healthier elderly population should not be viewed as a challenge for the century to come, because improving health and increased life expectancy mean that today's older population is able to lead a fuller life than any generation before them.



Vocabulary:

1. unfounded=groundless=tenuous
2. dominant-leading-main-major-prevailing
3. desperate to=anxious to=eager to=keen to
4. release=free=liberate
5. inheritance=legacy=heritage
6. backbone=main part
7. worthless=of no value=valueless=useless

TOPIC 74

Currently more and more people respect elders and become convinced that older people should live with their families, which is in contrast to the view that older people should live at a nursing home. What is your opinion?

SAMPLE ANSWER

The *swelling* of the aged population is an *inescapable* trend in many countries. There is no point in denying that managing this fundamental social change is an unprecedented challenge, such as presenting suitable housing and care options to the elderly people. As to whether a nursing home suits the elderly better than their own homes (where they can stay with their families), my view is that it is a decision that varies according to personal needs and characters.

It is true that nowadays, many older persons are able to stay active in their old age because of medical advances, healthier lifestyles and anti-ageing technologies. It is time that people *rethought* the perceptions of what it means to be old. Many retired people feel the need to contribute to the community after a



lifetime of service to businesses and their families. They love to be involved in all sorts of activities and enjoy being included in groups. Considering their desire to maintain their independence and be part of society, if they do not have a decent quality of life, they will feel *excluded*. For this reason, the retirement home is not a preferred option.

Families and friends are the key to a happy old age. Elders can enjoy the *company* of the peers of the same age in a nursing home but meanwhile, suffer a loss of family life. Living away from their families, older people are more prone to the feeling of loneliness. The *lingering* stereotype of the average senior citizen as a *frail* and *passive* family member should be scraped now. Older members are capable of *shouldering* more family responsibilities following their retirement. Their sense of wellbeing is linked to the extent to which they are involved in family duties.

Despite the strong preference among the elderly for staying with their families, a nursing home functions well to help those who do not have the company of their families. In addition to offering the access to social activity and engagement, a nursing home provides professional care service to old people, most of whom are not capable of caring and cooking for themselves. For those who are taken to hospital frequently for treatment, the rest home is particularly a good choice, as there are many health and medical specialists.

As suggested above, considering the fact that nowadays, many elderly people are able to remain healthy and active, they should be given the chances to participate in social and family activities as well as pursuing hobbies and other interests. Only when their ill health or emotional well-being becomes a serious problem, should a nursing home be taken into consideration.

Vocabulary:

1. swelling=growing=expanding
2. inescapable=unavoidable=inevitable
3. rethink=reassess=re-evaluate
4. excluded=expelled=isolated=insulated
5. company=accompany



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6. lingering=lasting=enduring=persistent

7. frail=weak=fragile=feeble

8. passive=inert-inactive

9. shoulder=bear

TOPIC 75

In many countries, women join the army as men do. However, some people argue that the army solely needs males. What is your opinion?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Stepping into the 21st century, women have set foot in nearly every walk of life. However, the army is still a male-dominated area in much of the world. A great many people hold *bias* against women's enrolment in the army. In my view, females can contribute to the army just as males do, despite some of their shortcomings.

The first standpoint to *conscribe* females is that they now have more chances to receive education. In comparison with the past, where the army recruitment policies focused on strength and fitness, the current focus is on academic ability. Physical fighting, either armed or unarmed, no longer features in modern warfare. It has been replaced by battles between tanks, armours, missiles or warplanes, most of which are computerised. In other words, females can perform military tasks as their male counterparts do, provided that they are well-educated and well-trained.

Secondly, women have inborn merits that *stand them in good stead*. Females are less likely to commit faults, for they are accustomed to dealing with



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matters with accuracy and caution. Patience and consideration of others account for the high presence of females in army hospitals or logistics departments. Other impressive personality' traits include their endurance of hardships, especially in *gruelling* conditions, and their tenderness, a character required in the caring profession in the army.

Notwithstanding their strengths, females have some limitations they may need to overcome. The first obstacle is the social attitudes. Females have to cope with the pressure exerted by their families, acquaintances, or friends, as serving the army is widely seen as a deadly job, which is exclusively for males. The second obstacle is sexual discrimination and harassment, which seems common in most armies and can discourage females from serving their countries.

In conclusion, females' presence in the army should be approved and encouraged. Their performance can be guaranteed by' their innate strengths, despite the fact that they might have to cope with prejudices and other external disturbances.

Vocabulary:

1. bias=prejudice=preconceived notion
2. conscribe=enlist=enrol
3. stand sb. in good stead=advantage sb
4. gruelling=harsh=tough=difficult=severe=arduous



TOPIC 76

Gender imbalance has long been a general phenomenon not only in the labour market but also in formal education. Some analysts argue that it is impossible to eliminate the underrepresentation of women in some subjects in the university. Do you agree or disagree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Although gender equality is widely promoted at modern colleges, females are still underrepresented in some subjects. Some people tend to treat it as a *persistent* problem, believing that the root of this problem is not in the university, but should be seen in a wider context. This conclusion is *cursory* and should be reviewed in today's society.

The first point to note is that females have *made a lot of inroads into* fields that have been traditionally dominated by men. To serve in the army was, for instance, the *exclusive* right of males, but today, more women have been enlisted. Many would consider the army as the most ideally "men only" profession. If females can make a success of it, they can succeed in every other field. The *ascendancy* of woman has been seen in the surge in their prominent positions in society and in the traditional blue collar business world. Women should not be considered *unqualified* or *incapable* of any university subject.

Universities that provide a gender-fair environment see benefits for both students and faculty. *Historically*, the gender *imbalance* at colleges has isolated students from the real world, where there is a high chance of dealing with females rather than just males. The tension or conflict between the sex in the university environment only allows students to exercise their ability to work with peers of the opposite sex. Faculty gets the chance to address the problem of gender inequality and discrimination, which has characterised campuses for decades. This results in a better learning environment, and thus a better thought of university.

Despite what has been discussed, it should be admitted that to put gender equality into practice is a complex task. There are a number of *hurdles* a female



applicant has to overcome in the pursuit of academic objectives, and the first is from family. Traditional families often feel reluctant to support their daughters' *quest for* higher education. The idea that university is mainly for men to learn a *trade* to support their wives and family remains prevalent. The women's role is being defined as supporting their husband through performing *menial* tasks of life.

In conclusion, achieving a gender balance in the university is no longer an unachievable aim at the present time. While the competence of women has widely been recognised by their male colleagues in a wide range of occupations, the balance between men and women in an academic environment is deemed as a necessity. Although problems such as gender prejudice and *favouritism* continue to prevent women's full participation in some subjects, these problems are losing their leverage.

Vocabulary:

1. Persistent = lasting = constant = permanent
2. Cursory = superficial
3. Make some inroads into
4. Exclusive = absolute = sole
5. Ascendancy = dominance = superiority
6. unqualified = incompetent = unprofessional
7. incapable = inept = incompetent = powerless
8. historically = in the past = in history = traditionally = in times gone by
9. imbalance = inequity = inequality
10. hurdle = obstacle = barrier = impediment = problem = difficulty
11. quest for = pursuit of
12. trade = skill = craft
13. menial - tedious = unskilled:
14. favouritism = preference = discrimination



TOPIC 77

Throughout the history, male leaders often made the society more violent and conflicting. If women governed the world, the world would be more peaceful. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

It is always interesting to notice that most of government leaders around the world are male. This situation is becoming more *acute* as gender roles have changed dramatically over the last century— with women taking more high-ranking positions in the corporate world. An issue people are openly debating is whether women, if taking office as world leaders, can bring a more peaceful world. In my opinion, any judgement about the direct link between government policies and the gender of the government leader *is premature*.

It is first important to correct a common misconception that a leader's decision is determined very often by his or her natural dispositions. The truth is that a leader *formulates* a policy mostly according to public opinions and makes a decision as the representative of a country. Admittedly, many *autocrats* in history were meanwhile *temperamental* males, who were *notorious* for their *volatile* characters, unpredictable *decrees* and aggressive stance. Some historians have offered another explanation for this general sign. A leader with such personalities was favoured and supported by a country during a specific period of time and chosen by a majority of the *electorate* to pursue the interest of a country. The rise of Hitler Adolf before World War II is a telling example. His attempt to establish a pure race of German people and colonise Europe reflected more a common desire shared by the whole German society than his own will.

Another general notion that females are intrinsically sympathetic and *nonviolent* is also ungrounded. Although it seems that females are generally less combative, *quarrelsome* and ambitious than males, there are always exceptions. The path to the top of the chain of command of a country is routinely filled with obstacles. Only those with strong leadership qualities can survive power struggles



and reach the top position. It meanwhile requires *contestants* to show their abilities to make tough decisions in situations, for instance, when the *sovereignty* of a country is under threat. A good example to support this is the decision made by Margaret Thatcher, the former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, to send a naval task force to *recapture* the Falkland Islands and settle a military conflict with Argentina. It shows that a female leader should show the same *decisiveness* as a male leader does.

There are many other examples of this kind to support the argument that a decision to start a war and choose a violent solution to problems is not on personal grounds. A more satisfactory explanation is that a leader makes a decision he or she considers in general interest. The relationship between gender and peace-making is therefore *remote*.

Vocabulary:

1. acute=critical=serious=sharp
2. premature=hasty=impulsive=untimely:
3. formulate=devise=prepare=invent=create
4. autocrat=tyrant=dictator=absolute ruler
5. temperamental =volatile=moody=unpredictable
6. notorious=infamous=dishonorable=disreputable
7. volatile=unstable=unpredictable=fickle=capricious
8. decree=order=ruling=verdict
9. electorate - voter-voting public
10. nonviolent=peaceful=diplomatic
11. quarrelsome=argumentative=hot-tempered=grouchy
12. contestant=competitor=contender=rival
13. sovereignty=autonomy=independence
14. recapture=resize=regain
15. decisiveness=determination=resolve=authority
16. remote=distant



TOPIC 78

Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of playing sports and participating in physical exercises.

SAMPLE ANSWER

Sport and recreational physical activity is an integral part of the society. Especially in today's society, where people have a growing concern about health, participation in recreational physical activity has been strongly promoted as part of a healthy lifestyle. What will be discussed below are the benefits of physical exercise, and some issues participants should pay attention to when increasing the level of physical activity.

One of the main benefits associated with regular exercise is the development of a healthy lifestyle. There is evidence that people can enjoy a longer life expectancy by adapting their daily lives to incorporate physical activity. There are many reasons for this. For example, sports perform a wide range of life-enhancing functions, such as boosting the immune system, burning fat, reducing the risk of experiencing major illnesses (e. g. , heart disease, diabetes). In a society where physical *inactivity*, unbalanced diet, stress and other problems are becoming increasingly serious, playing sports has significant implications to the well-being of the general population.

Another major benefit achieved from regular activity is the enhancement of social life. Combined with a balanced diet, sports, such as jogging, cycling or swimming, enable people to maintain a healthy weight, keep in shape, thereby boosting confidence on social occasions. In addition, sports and regular physical activities provide opportunities for social interactions. For example, team sports, such as soccer, rugby and basketball, allow participants to meet new teammates regularly and improve social life.

When physical exercise is highly recommended, it should be planned and managed well. Excessive physical exercise, for example, puts participants at the risk of injury. It is commonplace and hazardous that some people take up long duration and high intensity exercise despite lack of *stamina*. Although these



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potential risks are not to *negate* the benefits of physical activity, participants should take precautions and follow the instructions of sports professionals, tamers and coaches. In general, participants are advised to start gently and then increase the frequency of the activity until they can *stick to* it as an everyday routine.

As shown above, there are a large number of benefits obtainable in regular exercise, such as promoting health, preventing illness and boosting self-esteem. Sports and recreational injuries are nevertheless a common problem, which deserves people's attention. It can be avoided by increasing activity gradually to a desired level, instead of starting from intense training.

Vocabulary:

1. inactivity=idleness=sluggishness=indolence=immobility
2. stamina=strength=(physical or mental) energy=vigour
3. negate=cancel out = counteract = reverse
4. stick to=follow=abide by

TOPIC 79

Some people believe that national sports teams and individual athletes who represent their country should be financially supported by the government. Some people think that they should be funded by non-government groups (e. g. business, sponsorship). What is your opinion?

SAMPLE ANSWER

In recent years, one of the clearest trends in sports is that more and more corporations have come into play. It is a subject of discussion whether private financing should be accepted by the government to a larger extent and even the state can *concede* its control over national sports teams to private ownership. In my opinion, the involvement of *entrepreneurs* is essential and can be deemed as



a *complement* to government administration.

There are many reasons why the private sector should play a more active role in sports. First, the government alone cannot afford the expenditure involved in the sports industry, such as salaries of athletes, administrative costs, and so forth. By organising competitions efficiently and economically, enhancing athletes' market values, seeking out sponsors or *patrons*, the private sector not only raises necessary financing but also maximises the *return* of the sports industry'. A business's willingness to take part in this industry is attributable to many incentives. For example, it would help create an image which is associated with enthusiasm, energy and passion and can be turned into enormous income. Meanwhile it contributes a lot to its solid position in society, as well as good reputation.

Meanwhile, as sports have grown more competitive, the need for better equipment, facilities, nutrition and training methods has become urgent. Athletes should have well-developed *physiques*, which can be obtained only through extensive physical training and strict exercise. Private sponsors have expertise in different areas of technology, ranging from nutrition to the treatment of injuries. They are able to train athletes scientifically and effectively, reduce the risk of injuries and extend their career lives. Besides, as private sponsors are more financially capable of providing awards, bonus and other financial incentives to motivate athletes, their involvement is crucial to athletes' performance on the *playing field*.

The role of the private sector is therefore indispensable, but it is not to say that the government should *divest* itself of intervening in the sports industry'. Although the private sector is surely committed to seeking sponsorship and performing many fund-raising jobs, it is profit-oriented and therefore, very likely to make a decision ignorant of the interests of athletes. National teams are branded, marketed and sold as entertainment products, while the value of national pride and ethnical dignity is overlooked. It is also very likely that private investors are only interested in those sports with high media exposure, resulting in the *unbalanced* development of sports. For this reason, the government should retain the major ownership of the sports.

In conclusion, the sports world is in need of financial support and the



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assistance of the private sector. While providing financial resources, goods and services, business investors can obtain communicative and commercial benefits. By *giving the green light* to private financing, the government is more likely to advance the overall development of sports.

Vocabulary:

1. concede=give in=give up=grant=forfeit
2. entrepreneur=businessman=merchant
3. complement=supplement
4. patron=sponsor
5. return=earning=profit=revenue=gain
6. physique=figure=body=form=shape=body type
7. playing field=sports ground=arena
8. divest=rid=deprive
9. unbalanced=unequal=uneven
10. give the green light-permit

TOPIC80

Do you think that international sports events like the Olympic Games would continue or gradually lose their momentum?

SAMPLE ANSWER

The Olympics, known as the world's largest event, appeal to global audiences with displaying athletic skills and competitive spirit. Pageantry, keen rivalry, and high level of competition are the striking attractions of the Olympic Games. When many people are concerned about the forces that drive this event forward, there are fears about their sustainability. In my opinion, the Olympic torch



will be carried by relay runners on and on and would never be *extinguished*.

Reasons why the Olympics would continue are many. First, people, especially young males, are in need of some form of outlet for their energy and emotion related with spoils. The Olympics, as well as other international sports events, are ideal for them. Meanwhile, leisure activities are valued today, as economic conditions continue to improve. As part of the growing leisure industries, sport and sporting contests will become increasingly important. Moreover, the Olympics are of commercial values and of broad interest to mass media organisations, advertisers, sponsors and business managers. Because of those business opportunities, cities will not cease to compete to *host* sporting events. Needless to say, they can thus achieve or maintain world class status.

Apart from those tangible benefits, the Olympics possess other values. For example, the Olympics allow nearly all nations in the world to compete in the event rather than require any of them to meet the strict political requirements set by other worldwide organisations, such as the United Nations on *sovereignty*. The political, social and economic conflicts between countries and regions are disregarded in the face of Olympic spirit. Audiences are so *engrossed by* the grace, endurance and *fortitude* shown by athletes that they pay little attention to their nations of origin, cultural and language differences.

Despite those elements in favour of sustaining this international event, the Olympics are facing many challenges today. The expenditures are one of the biggest. So many services and facilities are required for serving athletes, media and *spectators* that up to present, only those cities from industrialised countries are capable of and interested in hosting such events. The Olympics are meanwhile the hotbed of various scandals. *Tempted* by the prospect of large financial rewards, many athletes take *proscribed* performance-enhancing drugs, a stain on the sportsmanship pursued by the Olympics. Critics also view international sporting events as a substitute for war, *ritualising* and *formalising* the conflicts between countries. What's more, the Games draw criticism for *embracing* commercialism. The Olympic torch, for example, an important symbol of the Olympics, has been used popularly in the commodity market.

As shown above, humankind's passion for competing in and watching games, the special appeals of the Olympic Games, and economic and non-



economic benefits brought to the host city all make the immediate *demise* of the games unlikely. However, ill the pursuit of those high ideals, the Olympics are meanwhile at the risk of being the instruments of commercialism and nationalism.

Vocabulary:

1. extinguish=put out=quench
2. host=provide facilities for
3. sovereignty=autonomy=independence
4. engrossed by=occupied by=absorbed in=immersed in
5. fortitude=determination=courage=strength
6. spectator=viewer=observer=watcher=audience
7. tempt=lure=entice=attract
8. proscribed=banned=prohibited=forbidden
9. ritualise=make sth. a ritual
10. formalise=make sth. formal
11. embrace=accept=adopt
12. demise=termination=death

TOPIC81

Wearing uniforms is popular in schools, but some people argue that it might cause damage to children's individuality. What is your opinion?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Wearing school uniforms is a *norm* in elementary and secondary schools in many countries. Although students are advised to follow this convention, it is a subject of debate whether wearing uniforms should be made compulsory or not. In my opinion, *designating* and standardising student *wardrobe* has numerous advantages.

One of the most significant benefits obtaining from a uniform is that it



eliminates economic *inequalities* and reduces the competition among students for showing off stylish clothes. Parents need not shop for expensive and varied wardrobes for their children. There will be less distraction at school and children will not strive to keep up with the fashion. Students from low income families would not feel isolated or inferior to others, while those from high income families would not become the target of *bullies*. It is because all students look as plain as their peers. A child's education should not be damaged by their inability to afford stylish clothes. Their performance at school should be recognised based on individual characters rather than on their economic status.

School uniforms are meanwhile believed to have positive effects on discipline. Students are discouraged from wearing make-up, jewellery or trendy clothing. When children are required to wear uniforms and *conform to a dress code*, they *conjure up* thoughts of order and safety. They will take their schooling more seriously. In addition, with *obscene* and gang-related clothing being forbidden, the school would find it much easier to combat the gang, decrease drug use, improve attendance and solve other discipline problems.

School uniforms are sometimes viewed as a symbol of restrictive culture and a significant determinant of children's self-expression, potentially suppressing students' individuality. However, this concern is groundless, because uniforms can vary according to the season, environment and occasion. It is not common that students wear different seasonal and activity uniforms within the same classroom during the day. After school, they can wear whatever street clothes they like. The impact of uniforms is therefore very limited on children's individuality.

As suggested above, wearing school uniforms should be retained as a rule, not only because it *unifies* students and makes the rich and poor look alike, but also because it can instill a sense of discipline in children. The fear that school uniforms can *suppress* individuality is ungrounded.

Vocabulary:

1. norm-normal ways of behaving
2. designate—choose—appoint—specify
3. wardrobe-clothes-clothing



4. inequality-disparity-inequity
5. bully=intimidator
6. conform to=abide by=comply with=follow
7. dress code-rules about clothes
8. conjure up=recall
9. obscene=sex-related
10. unify=bring together
11. suppress=stifle=repress=hold back

TOPIC82

Some people think that children should learn to compete, but others think that they should be taught to cooperate with others. What's your opinion?

SAMPLE ANSWER

There has been a lot of debate among educators about whether students should work together (known as cooperative learning) or individually (known as competitive learning). While the former model of learning encourages *collaboration* between students, the latter seems to value individualism and personal achievement. In my opinion, cooperative learning is more favourable, despite some of its drawbacks.

Cooperative learning occurs when students work collaboratively towards a common goal. A student's achievements are positively correlated with those of his or her peers in the group. Students work together in small clusters or groups and thus have a feeling of connection with other members of the group as they accomplish a common goal. Not only can it enhance the sense of teamwork among students but also it enables students to exercise their communication skills, with much of their learning being involved in face-to-face interaction.



Another benefit of cooperative learning is allowing students to take advantage of individual strengths and combined efforts. Working in a group, each member is assigned with a task, which closely matches his or her strengths, expertise and aptitudes. It will enhance efficiency and productivity. Meanwhile, group members might discuss how well they can function as a unit throughout the process and how effective their working relationships can be. It raises the possibility of students' making swift *adjustment* from school to work when the time comes.

However, some characteristics of collaborative learning have made it *inapplicable* on some occasions. For example, successful collaboration normally requires group dynamics, great variation in skills and intellectual levels of group members and a good command of social skills, and so forth. These prerequisites can easily *overwhelm* the possible benefits that collaborative learning techniques may have. Although collaborative learning tends to favour ordinary or slow students with giving them more support, it turns out that talented, eager students might learn little and become *disenchanted* over time. This situation can be remedied by encouraging intergroup competition, grouping students and allowing them to compete in groups. It minimises the negative effect of individualism while retaining the interest of outstanding students in group work.

In light of the above-mentioned facts, teachers should identify the best learning style for students and predict its outcomes, either destructive or constructive. In cooperative learning, personal success *springs* only *from* group success, while in competitive learning, one learner succeeds at the cost of other learners. Collaborative learning brings more benefits, despite the possibility of impeding outstanding students' personal development, a problem which should be handled *with caution*.

Vocabulary:

1. collaboration=partnership=group effort=teamwork=cooperation-alliance
2. adjustment=change
3. inapplicable=unsuitable=impractical
4. overwhelm= overpower



5. disenchanted= dissatisfied=disappointed
6. spring from=arise from=originate from=develop from=derive from
7. with caution=with care=prudently=sensibly

TOPIC83

Some people believe that educating children altogether will benefit them. Others think intelligent children should be taught separately and given special courses. Discuss those two views.

SAMPLE ANSWER

Not surprisingly, students feel *privileged* when working with someone with *exceptional* abilities even from very early years. With the aim to produce *elite* students, schools now endeavour to gather children of special talents and offer them special courses. There are both advantages and disadvantages to this educational philosophy.

Treating gifted children the same as others might seriously hamper their personal development. Imagine that a maths *prodigy* works out solutions to a thorny and tricky problem *briskly*, it makes no sense to force him or her to follow an ordinary curriculum. Some might argue that it will foster depression or frustration amongst low-achieving students if talented students are arranged with a special class and given specialised instruction. Many students think otherwise. Studying with high achievers cause slow students to feel frustrated and cast doubt on their effort. Feelings of worthlessness will drive them further toward low performance.

Another advantage of grouping students is enabling them to advance a strong friendship or partnership within different groups. Some opponents of this strategy argue that special students suffer socially, in a misguided belief that students would seldom talk to each other in an air of professional *jealousy*. This stereotype has blinded people to the fact that students with the same background



knowledge are more likely to share a common topic of conversation. By exchanging experience and knowledge, they can make quicker progress toward their academic success.

Despite the significant position of special courses in education, it is not to say that ordinary students should be denied the same opportunity. Treating students differently can twist a child's perception of his or her abilities and potential. A student experiencing great difficulty in studying should be provided with extra support rather than being treated as the loser. The sense of *exclusion* does not inspire their performance or commitment but merely triggers theft further decline in school record.

In view of the arguments *outlined* above, ability grouping is of great value. It fosters a nutritious environment in which talented students can facilitate their learning process and easily find their *pals* of the same gift. However, special courses should be open to any willing learner; otherwise, students will feel discriminated.

Vocabulary:

1. privileged=honoured=advantaged
2. exceptional=extraordinary=outstanding=incomparable
3. elite=best=most talented
4. prodigy=genius=phenomenon
5. briskly=rapidly=quickly
6. jealousy=envy=resentment
7. exclusion=isolation=segregation=elimination
8. outline=summarise=delineate
9. pal-peer



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TOPIC84

Some people who have been successful in the society do not attribute their success to the theoretical knowledge they learned at university. What is your opinion on the factors contributing to one's achievement?

SAMPLE ANSWER

People harbour different perceptions of tertiary education. Although higher education is recognised by many as the most important predictor of one's success, its *efficacy* has been subject to long discussion. It is always interesting to note that some people do not owe their success to the knowledge they acquired at university, despite the great effort they ever made in obtaining a qualification. In my opinion, tertiary education itself cannot guarantee one's success, and there are many other elements combined to mould a successful role model.

Knowledge, an essential element of one's success, is normally acquired through formal education, but it is not the only approach. A university is home to those teaching professionals who have a firm *grasp* of a given knowledge area and can impart it to students by various techniques. However, not all the knowledge, experience and skills can be passed on to students by teaching. Experiences and *rules of thumb* are non-transferable at a traditional classroom. The only way to gain a mastery of them is the full participation in a job.

In addition to *hands-on* skills and practical experience, characters can *foretell* one's prospects. Society has been *polarised* as economic and social changes make it more competitive. Those with outstanding academic qualifications are not sought-after as much as before. Employers show interest in other qualities of an applicant, for example, *resilience*, willpower and adaptability. It is increasingly believed that the most successful are normally those who are most likely to adapt to changes in their world. Some other qualities, such as the ability to work in a hard-working, stressful and ever-changing environment, are viewed as the shared traits of successful people. Running toward success is more



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of a marathon than of a sprint. Only those persistent, *self-motivated* and *self-directed* can eventually attain their objectives.

There are some other factors, such as opportunities, that play a contributing role in one's success, but *for simplicity's sake*, one does not need to cite all these factors to uphold the *assertion* that a college degree is not the precondition to personal success. Practical experience, a mastery of different skills and personality suffice to illustrate the complex nature of personal achievement.

Vocabulary:

1. efficacy=effectiveness=usefulness
2. grasp=understanding=comprehension
3. rule of thumb=a rule based on experience
4. hands-on=practical
5. foretell = predict=forecast = harbinger
6. polarise=separate
7. resilience=flexibility=elasticity
8. self-motivated=energetic
9. self-directed=autonomous=independent
10. for simplicity's sake
11. assertion=declaration=contention=claim=statement



TOPIC85

It is generally believed that education is of vital importance to individual development and the well-being of societies. What should education consist of to fulfil both these functions?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Education is one of the largest items of government spending. It is regarded as the *pathway* to economic prosperity, an instrument for *combating* unemployment and the driving force behind scientific and technological advance. Given the importance of education for individuals and society, its scope, constituents and *configuration* have long been the subject of research, studies and discussion.

Theoretically, a student is expected to acquire knowledge of a specific subject or profession at school, but throughout the learning process, education should focus on the development of their skills. A successful school leaver should show exceptional abilities to acquire, organise, interpret, evaluate and communicate information when graduate. *Similarly*, a proficient learner should meanwhile be a resource coordinator and user, proficient in identifying useful resources (such as information and capital) with speed and utilising them to the full advantage. A qualified student should also possess some other skills, such as problem solving and critical thinking, which are essential not only for their further education but also for their careers later in life.

When students become knowledgeable and *resourceful*, they should be equipped with competence that would enhance the *transition* from school to work. An excellent learner is admittedly important to society, but more important is his or her productivity. Education should absorb new substances and embrace new concepts in order for students to keep in touch with community and have full knowledge of the needs of community. Besides, a school should facilitate the progress of students in every practical field and give them opportunities to try new tasks and take on new roles. By enhancing their hands-on skills and job-related skills, schools can foster students' and society's future development and



prosperity.

When enhancing learners' academic excellence and professionalism, education cannot overlook learners' physical and psychological well-being. In this fast-changing and competitive society, many people are not *in good form* in coping with stress and health problems. Encouraging students to reduce stress and develop good health habits is therefore important. Sports, for example, function effectively as a health facilitator and as a good stress reducer. These extra curriculum activities can be combined with academic activities to boost students' mental health and learning outcomes.

To conclude, today's students are expected to be *versatile*, productive and healthy individuals when they finish schooling. With society' becoming more specialised and economies demanding more skills, students should focus on both theoretical and practical aspects of education. They should lay a stress on physical activities as well.

Vocabulary:

1. pathway=path=access=entrance
2. combat=address=tackle=prevent=fight against
3. configuration = composition=formation=make-up
4. similarly=likewise
5. resourceful=ingenious=smart
6. transition=change=changeover
7. in good form=performing well
8. versatile=multitalented=all-round



TOPIC86

Nowadays, some universities offer graduate students skills that assist them to find employment, but some people believe that the main function of university should be to access knowledge for its sake. What is your opinion?

SAMPLE ANSWER

There is an upsurge in practical knowledge in these years and people have seen many education courses being totally work-based. The idea that students should apply theory to practice or even focus on practice only has become widely accepted, in my opinion, schooling should be designed to prepare children for real life, rather than *underlining* the academic aspect only.

There can be little doubt that the main purpose of providing university education is to assist young *contenders* to begin and pursue their future careers. The hypothesis that theory and abstract conceptual knowledge are important lies in the fact that they are the fundamentals of tertiary education, but without *bridging* theory and practice, education will possess little value and receive much less support from the public. A university should place its emphasis on vocational training (or career education), which is directly related to a specific *trade*, occupation or vocation. It is particularly true when many well-paid jobs require intense use of technical skills.

Aside from theoretical knowledge, universities should *assume* the *responsibility* to enhance, diversify and *consolidate* the skills students can possibly use in many life situations. Life skills refer to a wide range of skills necessary for successful living, including recognising other people's feelings, setting realistic and attainable goals and employing problem-solving strategies. The university can devise its curriculum to achieve these outcomes. For example, by organising sports and other physical activities, the university can help students enhance their team-building and leadership skills. Meanwhile, team *assessments* can be designed to facilitate students' group discussion and improve information-sharing skills. These skills, when taken together, enable students to put their potential to the maximum and to apply the knowledge *dextrously*.



Meanwhile, as education is widely accepted as the foundation of society, emphasis should be placed on the relationship between education and economic success. Education is sometimes considered useless because it leads learners away from practicality and *distances* them from real life. To tackle this problem, educators are required to restructure the curriculum to suit the emerging trends in society. A good example is that if some industries, such as retail, tourism and information technology, are projected to have good prospects, educational institutes should generate skilled *workforce* for those industries, thereby giving a boost to the employability of young contenders.

As suggested in the above discussion, the role of education is to prepare young generations for paid work. Vocational education or training should be integrated in the curriculum, in an effort to make students productive members of society.

Vocabulary:

1. underline=underscore=emphasise=highlight
2. contender= aspirant = applicant = candidate
3. bridge=link=connect=join
4. trade-craft-line of work=occupation=profession
5. assume responsibility=take responsibility
6. consolidate=strengthen=secure
7. assessment=examination=appraisal
8. dextrously=skilfully= adroitly=proficiently=adeptly
9. distance=dissociate=detach=separate
10. workforce=worker=employee=personnel=labour force



TOPIC87

Nowadays, some universities offer graduate students skills that assist them to find employment, but some people believe that the main function of university should be to access knowledge for its sake. What is your opinion?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Traditionally, the task of teachers was to use a variety of methods and materials to impart the knowledge of a given field to students. However, this notion has been *refuted* by many people, who consider it important to integrate other elements in education, such as *morality*. In my opinion, moral education will become a central part of modern education and teachers should be responsible for correcting students' behaviour and improving their moral values.

Ethics *in plain words* means studying and analysing right from wrong, which is identical with the objective of education, telling the young generation what IS the right thing to do. Without being aware of the distinction between acceptable and *accusable* behaviours, young people become *delinquents* and criminals, rather than qualified workers and successful individuals. It is particularly true as people are living in a society where violent juvenile crime, teen pregnancy and suicide are becoming worrying problems. There IS thus a strong call for linking the modification of young people's behaviour to the teaching of moral and social values in schools. Teachers are expected to take preventive measures to address misbehaviours, such as substance abuse, focus on the root causes of the problems, such as family violence, and help those who appear troubled. It stops a problem among young people from occurring or *reoccurrence*.

Ethical principles and moral values have relevance to the order of a society and individual citizens' quality of life. The young people who are *unaware* of standards of morality will end up with breaching their duties as law-abiding citizens and mining the moral values of the society. Nor can they become happy, successful and productive. A good example to support this is that many recent business frauds, bribery, embezzlement and other illegitimate activities have been



found related to some well-educated but *unethical* people. Despite their strong educational background and high intelligence, they cause damage to enterprises and communities.

Ethical education can also help shape the behaviour pattern of individual citizens. Morality is neither a vain promise nor a collection of *ideals* that appear in writing only. It is reflected in how people respond and act in different social situations, such as whether they habitually or *instinctively* reserve seats for the elderly and disabled at a bus. When children and young people construct most of their knowledge of the world through social interactions, teachers are in a very good position to impart such knowledge to them. Young people are hence well informed of moral principles, code of conduct and motivated to speak and act in a manner as intended.

As suggested above, teachers should play a more active role in the moral development of young people, instead of simply translating knowledge of a subject into course materials and imparting it to students. They should *pass on* good judgment, moral principles and wisdom to students, all contributing to students' individual life fulfillment and well-being.

Vocabulary:

1. refute=disprove=contest
2. morality=ethic=moral
3. in plain words=in simple terms
4. accusable=detestable
5. delinquent=criminal=wrongdoer=law-breaker
6. reoccurrence=occurring again
7. unaware of = ignorant of=uninformed about
8. unethical=immoral=dishonorable
9. ideal-principle=standard=be I let-moral value
10. instinctively=intuitively=impulsively
11. pass on=impart=convey



TOPIC88

Education used to be a short period of training, but today, people treat it like a lifelong practice. Do you agree or disagree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

The notion of learning throughout life is not new but only until recently has been discussed to a larger extent. More than learning for employment opportunities and competitive positions, learners pursue academic opportunities for many other purposes today. One has reasons to believe that education is more likely to be a lifelong *pursuit*, rather than an isolated practice in the century to come.

Because of technological advances, people are now given learning opportunities in different contexts at work, at home or through leisure activities. People in a modern society are not confined to formal channels (e. g. , schools) but provided with more options, such as studying either via the Internet or television, known as distance learning or e-learning. Learning can occur at all ages. The working people, parents with childcare responsibilities, the disabled and the elderly are all able to learn now, with time and location constraints being *transcended*. The era when education was available only in a formal school and intended for young people is bygone.

Another force that drives lifelong education is the constantly changing nature of the society. It is certain that at the present time, no career fields can stay *static*. Because of the acceleration of scientific and technological progress, reeducation seems to be an urgent need throughout one's working life, especially to those who work in hi-tech industries, such as IT. People feel compelled to keep themselves well-informed of all the latest changes in the industry they are working in, in case that they fall behind their peers. It is in sharp contrast to the past, where university education was sufficient for a professional career spanning three or more decades.

Pursuit of one's own targets is another reason why education tends to last a lifetime nowadays. The interests of people in today's society are not limited to



material wealth and better standards of living, but involve other desires, ranging from self-expression, individuality to fulfillment of their own dreams. When formal education in the past was generally vocational and intended for *sustaining* life, many forms of education in today's society are non-vocational. For example, many people study philosophy, psychology, painting, music, history and other arts subjects with the purpose to put meaning into the whole of life, rather than living simply as an income earner.

In summary, a combination of various factors, including the educational opportunities provided outside standard educational systems, individuals' craving for achievement, and the soaring competitive pressure, accounts for why education has no endings in one's lifetime.

Vocabulary:

1. pursuit=hobby=interest
2. transcend=surpass=excel=exceed
3. static=stationary=inert=unchanging=constant=unvarying
4. span=extend=cross
5. sustain=maintain

TOPIC 89

Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of studying abroad.

SAMPLE ANSWER

In recent years, there has been a growing trend toward studying abroad among young people. When pursuing educational opportunities overseas is widely considered as a *life-transforming* opportunity, students should *take on* a number of challenges. Below are some specific advantages and disadvantages of studying abroad.

Studying abroad allows one to gain a real knowledge of a new culture and a



new language. By interacting and communicating with native speakers daily, students can enhance their foreign language skills. They will simultaneously explore the values and ways of life of the host country. For example, Asian students might be surprised to find that communication in Western countries is starkly open and straightforward, in sharp contrast to the intense use of non-verbal messages in communication in their home countries. Not surprisingly, even simple everyday experiences, such as buying food and mailing letter, can help improve language *proficiency* and promote culture learning. It gives students new perspectives on how things are done.

During their overseas trips, many students will learn how to take care of themselves and live independently. They might have initial difficulties in fulfilling even the simplest tasks at the very- beginning, such as grocery shopping, doing laundry, making living arrangements and setting accounts for electricity, but before long, they will adapt to the new environment and become *self-sufficient*. Moreover, by interacting with people from different backgrounds, overseas students can exercise and improve their social skills, an experience which is of great value to their careers later in life.

While studying abroad has its advantages, it might have its drawbacks. Most of the students are lack of life experience when they first travel overseas. Failure to cope with the problems that arise from their everyday lives might cause frustration. They feel helpless, suffer homesick and in worse cases, have a *breakdown*.

As suggested above, studying abroad poses both opportunities and challenges. While young people can become *polyglots* and independent individuals, gain opportunities for personal growth and develop an appreciation of cultural differences, they have to cope with the stress of living overseas.

Vocabulary:

1. life-transforming= life-changing
2. take on=assume=undertake
3. proficiency=fluency



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4. self-sufficient=independent=autonomous-self-reliant
5. breakdown=collapse=depression
6. polyglot-multilingual individual

TOPIC 90

Some people argue that learning a second language involves learning the culture of the country where this language is spoken (including lifestyles). What is your opinion?

SAMPLE ANSWER

To most people, second language acquisition is a lengthy and *exhausting* process. A general approach taken by most learners is to learn vocabulary and memorise grammar rules. They contend that language speaks for itself and the meaning of language lies in the language itself. In my opinion, a language goes beyond its *literal* meaning and delivers different messages as situations change. The cultural context and background of a language have a bearing on the forming of a language. There is no distinction between acquiring a language and acquiring a culture.

The first reason to support the above *contention* is that culture influences the evolution and formation of a language. Learning a culture can help learners understand many aspects of a language, wording, *syntax*, and so forth. For example, word order, the order in which words appear in sentences, differs from language to language. In some languages, the object normally comes ahead of the subject, *as opposed to* the word order in the English language. It *mirrors* the *disparity* in ways of seeing things and ways of thinking between people who speak different languages. Learning a culture can draw the attention of learners to these differences and therefore lead them to use a foreign language appropriately.



Familiarity with a culture is also known as the *prerequisite* of communication with native speakers. Effective communication relies not only on wording, pronunciation and sentence construction but also on physical *gesture*, body language and facial expressions. In fact, non-verbal messages sometimes tell people more than verbal messages do. For example, silence in the English-speaking country might indicate the agreement of the speaker on something, but in some Asian countries, silence might *convey* a message to the contrary, disagreement or even *resentment*. There is no denying that by learning the cultural dimensions of a language, a language learner can make him-or-herself acquainted with the skills and habits involved in cross-cultural communication.

Although the importance of studying the cultural aspect of language is indisputable, it should not be over-emphasised. For most learners, especially for those at an elementary level, the cultural elements of a language are remote and *incomprehensible*. *Intrusion* of these messages will create confusion. Learners will *flounder* when the progress toward success is little and the situation appears to be *unmanageable*. Language acquisition requires a high commitment of time and effort, so new learners are advised to concentrate on the language itself at the first stage.

From what has been discussed, one can make it clear that culture is an element that determines the difference between languages. Failing to recognise this would *impede* language learning. However, for new learners, acquiring a culture is less practical, for it requires great effort and produces little outcome.

Vocabulary:

1. exhausting=tiring=arduous=strenuous
2. literal=plain=unvarnished=basic=original
3. contention-assertion-argument-opinion-claim
4. syntax= sentence structure-language rules
5. as opposed to-rather than
6. mirror=reflect
7. disparity=difference =discrepancy
8. prerequisite=precondition



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9. gesture-signal
10. convey=communicate=transmit=pass on
11. resentment=anger=hatred=antipathy
12. incomprehensible=perplexing=beyond understanding
13. intrusion=incursion
14. flounder=have difficulty=struggle
15. unmanageable=uncontrollable
16. impede=obstruct=hinder=hamper=hold back

TOPIC 91

Some people argue that history is of little or no use to US. others believe that studying history gives many benefits. Discuss those views and give your own opinion.

SAMPLE ANSWER

History has long been recognised as a discipline, but it seems to be a fact that few students have a clear concept of why they should study it. Many people even argue that studying history is *meaningless*, considering the past differs in many important ways from the present. In my opinion, there are many facts to show the importance of history as a subject.

Despite the *skepticism* over the relevance of historical events to today's society, understanding the past contributes to people's decision making in today's social context. By studying history, people can draw on the experience of the generations before them, taking a similar path to success and avoiding a dead-end. Besides, they understand how and why people (e. g., Hitler, Napoleon)



behaved as they did. They are aware that people are neither good nor bad but *motivated* in complex ways. Instead of being *misguided* by stereotypes or historians, one learns to analyse issues or subjects based on historical context and perspective, take a *dispassionate* view toward today's political and social problems and trace origins and causes objectively.

To students, studying history is not only to seek self-knowledge, but also to enhance their skills and make themselves all-round individuals. The study of history requires independent research as well as *coherent* explanations. Students are encouraged to do as much work independently as they can and to read widely and extensively. In addition to widening their experience, it helps students develop qualities of perception and judgements. Students are increasingly capable to analyse and compare conflicting views. All these improvements can foster a student's intellectual independence, *sharpness* and maturity. These strengths are *transferable* across occupations and careers.

Although studying history is beneficial, its importance should not be *overstated*. The world is changing so rapidly that the lesson from the past might be applicable in particular circumstances only. For instance, imperialism is now occurring in business or culture, rather than in colonies. Taking the same approaches to combat imperialism might be counter effective. Studying history should not be taken as a demanding job but preferably as a pastime that satisfies people's *curiosity* over the past. In addressing real-life issues, current events give people more hints and advice than historical events do.

From what has been discussed, studying history is very important, particularly in increasing one's knowledge and enhancing one's intellectual abilities. However, it should not be attached with *unjustified* importance because its applications in today's society are not known *with certainty*.

Vocabulary:

1. meaningless=insignificant=worthless=unimportant
2. skepticism=doubt
3. motivate=inspire=encourage=stimulate
4. misguide=mislead



5. dispassionate=unbiased=objective=impartial
6. coherent=consistent
7. sharpness=acuteness
8. transferable=conveyable=convertible
9. overstate=exaggerate=over-emphasise
10. curiosity=inquisitiveness=interest
11. unjustified=groundless
12. with certainty=certainly

TOPIC 92

Do you think middle school students should study international news as a subject?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Today, watching news, a means of learning what is happening around the world, has become a way of life to many people. When the value of news is undisputed, an issue of debate is whether it is necessary to include international news as part of school curriculum. I am of the opinion that it will be an enheartening change.

The first point to support the importance of international news is that it reminds young people of the forces of globalisation and international developments. In today's world, businesses operate beyond borders and countries are closely connected with each other. Any country that fails to recognise this would miss out on the benefits of globalisation. To young people, watching international news leads them to develop a global perspective and world *vision*. They learn to elicit information from news and use it in decision making, for example, studying abroad, career option, and so forth. It is of critical importance as they are very likely to face stiff international competition later in life.

Another benefit obtained from studying international news is enhancing



young people's capabilities and skills, such as critical thinking skills. Living in a society that is bombarded with different messages, many people have become lost in search for useful information and unable to understand and absorb information. Studying international news drives them to explore perspectives and get a view of every aspect of an international event. Reading editorials allows them to practice independent thinking.

Despite those benefits, integrating international news into curriculum requires educators to address several issues in advance. First, students might be distracted by a great variety of conflicting arguments produced by different experts. However, as mentioned above, it is *immensely* conducive to the development of their analytical skills. Meanwhile, it could be time-consuming for students to read those news stories that are *identical* with each other in essence, although they appear in different papers. It, therefore, requires teachers to select news in advance and play an active role.

In conclusion, one has reasons to believe that international news deserves a place in school curriculum. By reading, watching and analysing international news, future generations will acquire knowledge of the whole world and enrich a variety of skills.

Vocabulary:

1. vision=foresight=farsightedness=forethought
2. immensely=vastly=greatly=immeasurably
3. identical=the same=duplicated=alike



TOPIC 93

Opinions divide concerning what plays a more important role in people's personality development, nature or nurture. What is your opinion?

SAMPLE ANSWER

The idea of nature-versus-nurture has long been debated, with no *conclusive resolution*. People are faced with an apparent paradox: while some studies have *ascertained* that no *nexus* exists between genes and behavioural patterns, anecdotal evidence suggests that it is not *a foregone conclusion*. This essay is to evaluate these two schools of thoughts, with some facts being closely examined.

It is still a myth why some children, born in *affluent* families and *raised* in a positive enriching environment, still *embark on* a career of crime and self-destruction. It points to factors outside of the parental and educational environment; or in plain words, it could be traced back to genetics and thus a natural progression. It must be remembered that life is not simple. Nor is any human being. Even though environment is so overwhelming that it either suppresses or *fortifies* personality traits of individuals, individuals differ from each other in many aspects, rather than show identical traits. Genetic difference shows its effect from as early as one's preschool years, throughout adolescence and into adulthood.

The impacts of nature seem sizeable in some other cases. For example, a couple can give birth to twins who *resemble* each other in both appearance and behaviour. Ruthlessly separated at birth, and brought up in completely different environment, the twins would most likely grow into identical adults, developing extremely similar characteristics and even showing the same likes and dislikes. So *striking* are the effects of their genetic make-up that those of the environment are *obscured*.

Despite the strong proof that nature is responsible for one's behaviour, it is not to deny the function of the environment people are raised in. Studies show that many young criminals come from problem families, who have a history of



violence and crime. Without good job prospects, they end up with finding *solace* in gangs. The circle of poverty and crime will continue, as these young criminals start new families with the characteristics of their own.

As suggested above, people are made up by both learned and born *traits*. There is no need to reach a conclusion that either environment or nature plays a decisive part in one's character and behaviour development. Although the effect of genetic heredity is overt, one cannot afford to ignore that of environment where a child is brought up.

Vocabulary:

1. conclusive=definite=irrefutable=decisive
2. resolution=result=declaration
3. ascertain=find out=establish
4. nexus=relation=link
5. a foregone conclusion
6. affluent=wealthy=rich=high-income=high-class
7. raise=bring up=rear=nurture
8. embark on=initiate=attempt
9. fortify=strengthen=reinforce
10. resemble=bear a resemblance to=be similar to
11. striking=conspicuous=remarkable=noticeable
12. obscure=dim
13. solace=comfort= consolation
14. trait=attribute=characteristic=feature



TOPIC 94

Do you think that parents should be punished if their five-year-old child commits a crime? From what age should children be held responsible for their own behaviours?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Parents' intervention can heavily influence a child's personality and behaviour development. It is an interesting subject of discussion whether parents should be *liable* for their five-year-old child's law offending behaviour or even *subject to* punishment. In my viewpoint, parents must be held responsible.

Unlike adults, children break the law *in the absence of* either incentive or motive. Their acts are *accidental* and *intuitive, signalling* the accumulative effect of the environment where they grow up. Children in *formative* years are particularly susceptible to whom they meet and what they see in their daily lives. For example, their violent acts are very likely to reflect a mixed effect of their repeated exposure to violence. Parents should therefore act as *gatekeepers* to prevent their children from watching TV and playing video games, thereby *negating* the influence of media. Once a child uses violence, it reveals that his or her parents have habitually failed to fulfil those duties. For this reason, parents should be accountable for their child's wrongdoing.

Another example to show parents' effect on their child's behaviour is that many parents fail to set a positive role model. More often than not, parents have their own behaviour problems (such as using violence in the face of their children). As children have a natural ability to imitate others, their violent or unlawful behaviour is potentially a replica of their parents'. That's why children with fine upbringing normally show their *courtesy* and professional etiquettes in coping with real-life problems, such as conflicts with others, while those children with poor upbringing are more likely to act violently. People are thus not surprised to see that many young delinquents had unhappy lives and felt *discontented* with their life circumstances in which they grew up.

In general, 18 is the age when an individual starts to be legally responsible for



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his or her acts. This is an age from which a child is ready to explore life him-or-herself and assumes life responsibilities. *For the most part* they are allowed to vote, drive, drink and smoke. They have sufficient experience, knowledge and competence for decision making and reaching moral conclusions.

In conclusion, parents should be subject to punishment when their children violate the law, in view of their tremendous influence on their child's behaviour. It is their *inescapable* responsibility until their child *comes of age*.

Vocabulary:

1. Liable = responsible = accountable
2. Subject to = exposed to
3. In the absence of = lacking
4. Accidental = unintentional = unplanned = inadvertent
5. Intuitive = instinctive = spontaneous
6. Signal = indicate
7. Formative = impressionable
8. Gatekeeper = guardian = protector = custodian
9. Negate = counteract = reverse = wipe out
10. Courtesy = politeness
11. Discontented = dissatisfied = unhappy = displeased
12. For the most part = on the whole = principally
13. Inescapable = inevitable
14. Come of age = come to maturity = become an adult



TOPIC 95

Some scientists believe that studying the behaviour of 3-year-old children can predict their criminality. To what extent do you think a crime is a product of human nature or is it possible to stop children from growing up to be criminals?

SAMPLE ANSWER

The *age-old* nature vs nurture debate is concerned mainly with reaching a conclusion over genetic and environmental influences on criminal behaviour, which has long been a subject of interest to psychologists and criminologists. Some scientists subscribe to a view that studying the behaviour of 3- year-old children can help foretell their criminality. To the best of my knowledge, both genes and environment have a bearing over the development of one's behaviour patterns, including criminal or violent behaviour.

The notion that some individuals have a genetic *predisposition* for criminal behaviour can seek support from a large number of facts. For example, aggression and impulsivity, two personality traits commonly found among adult criminals, are in fact *evident* from as early as those people's preschool years. Criminals are also *diagnosed* to share a similar set of psychological problems, indicating their *heritable* nature. If given the right *circumstances*, individuals with those genes would eventually engage in criminal activity. For example, the children raised in an environment where violence and illegitimacy are norms are more likely to commit similar crimes in adulthood. It is therefore fair to say that the effect of heredity is *worsened* by the environment.

While the impact of genetic predisposition is recognised, genetics is not solely responsible for *unlawful* acts. Criminal tendencies are admittedly clear among those children whose parents have a long criminal history. However, the chances for their engagement in criminal activities would not become bigger until they are exposed to an environment that breeds such activities. Environment can modify, weaken or reinforce one's characteristics. It is the reason why a child can act in a different manner from his or her parents. It is neither practiceable nor



rational to make a moral judgment on a child simply by their genetic makeup and *label* him or her as a criminal while ignoring the influence of factors like education.

A proper understanding of the impact of environment on individual behaviour also enables people to recognise the influence of some other elements, such as schooling and *upbringing*. Children, whose biological parents have criminal records, have the potential for personal success, if adopted and reared by well-educated and upper class families. Likewise, children who experience family problems like family breakdown and child abuse are more likely to commit violent crimes later in life. These elements, working either in isolation or in groups, lead to a child's criminal behaviour.

In the light of the facts outlined above, one can conclude that the interaction between genes and the environment is a predictor of criminal behaviour. Certain genes, when combined with certain environmental factors, lead to criminal behaviour. To prevent individuals with criminal disposition from committing crimes, schooling, parenting and some other factors are of critical importance.

Vocabulary:

1. age-old=long-standing
2. predisposition=disposition=penchant
3. evident=obvious=apparent-manifest-marked=patent=plain
4. diagnose=detect=identify
5. heritable=inherited=hereditary
6. circumstance=environment=condition
7. worsen=multiply
8. unlawful=illegal=illegitimate=prohibited
9. label-regard-consider-brand
10. upbringing=rearing=education



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TOPIC 96

Computers do not help children learn more effectively. On the contrary, the use of computers has a negative effect on children's physical and mental development. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

In the new millennium, computer technology is set to become an essential feature of the society. People are very often confronted with the argument concerning the impact of widespread computer on young people, in my opinion, using computers can be either beneficial or harmful, so moderation is the key.

Excessive use of computers is unarguably *detrimental*, as it can place children at risk in terms of their physical, social and psychological development. Studies have pointed to the fact that children need physical activity and social interaction to be healthy, happy and productive individuals. *Unmonitored* use of computers isolates them from those activities and makes them indifferent to the real world. They are so *immersed in* the computer that they are *rarely* concerned about the people and matters around them. It leads to a drop in their interaction with others, organised sports and other social activities that are *conducive* to their development.

Another *hazard* of excessive computer use is children's increased exposure to violent and sexual contents beyond their years, which have long-term negative effects on their lives. Repeated exposure to violence has been recognised and singled out as a decisive element responsible for children's subsequent aggressive behaviour. Although computer games that have violent *themes* have been forbidden in many countries, tens of thousands of children are vulnerable to other forms of violence that spread on the Internet.

Despite the negative effects of excessive computer use, adults can take advantage of computer technology in different areas of education. Educational games, for example, are believed to have positive effects on children's intellectual well-being. Some computer games are developed specifically to help children



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develop academic skills required for schoolwork. Computers meanwhile provide an *escape* for children who experience high levels of pressure in the daytime and offer them a balance between campus and off-campus life.

As suggested above, healthy and appropriate use of computers is accepted and encouraged. By giving children ongoing instructions, imposing a limit on computer time and *classing* the types of content a child can view, teachers and parents are able to use the computer technology to great advantage while avoiding possible harms.

Vocabulary:

1. detrimental=harmful=damaging=unfavourable
2. unmonitored=unsupervised=uncontrolled
3. immersed in=absorbed in=engrossed by
4. rarely=hardly=seldom=once in a blue moon
5. conducive=favourable=helpful=advantageous=beneficial
6. hazard=risk=peril=danger
7. theme=main subject=main idea
8. escape=diversion=distraction=pastime
9. class=classify=categorise=group



TOPIC 97

In modern society, some people argue that schools become unnecessary as children can study at home via the Internet. Do you agree or disagree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

The rapid *progression* of the Internet has paved the way for the growing popularity of distance learning. People are now *speculating on* the possibility of the Internet *taking the place of* a traditional school. In my opinion, given the continued advance in technology, Internet-based learning can serve as an alternative to traditional class-based learning.

Online education has a large number of advantages. It allows students to set their own study time. Unlike traditional learning, online courses offer children greater flexibility and enable them to create a timetable in line with their needs and characteristics. Students can also save tuition fees, because a virtual school normally charges students much less than a conventional school does. It is particularly a great option for those students with physical *handicaps*, who have great difficulties in commuting to school campus. For those who live far away from the school, online education is remarkably favourable. It can be expected that the Internet is very likely to replace a physical school as an education provider in the near future if its drawbacks are removed.

The first drawback of a virtual school is lack of human contact, as opposed to a noted *merit* of traditional teacher-led education, providing students with ongoing daily interactions with teachers. This weakness can be solved by taking advantage of bandwidth network technologies. The interaction between students can be guaranteed when one can contact with another—whenever and wherever he or she likes—via email, post comments on message boards and chat rooms, or even videoconference for communication. Educators are also concerned that online learning cannot make all skills and knowledge *transferable*. For example, some courses require a high proportion of hands-on practice, which is beyond the capacity of online training. This problem can be nevertheless addressed by



introducing multimedia as a teaching aid. By using audio and video, students can *sample* different learning styles and acquire both general and specialised knowledge of a subject.

As suggested above, there are plenty of benefits of online learning, including flexibility, cost-saving and convenience. Although it has two problems, lack of interaction and failing to provide a wide range of courses, both can be overcome as technology advances.

Vocabulary:

1. progression=development=evolution=advance
2. speculate on=consider=contemplate
3. take the place of=substitute=supplant
4. handicap=disability
5. merit=value=advantage
6. transferable=conveyable
7. sample=try=experiment

TOPIC 98

The computer is widely used in education and some people think that teachers will not play important roles in the classroom. To what extent do you agree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Computers have been favoured by more and more educators and teachers as a key component of a perfect educational environment, its role in a traditional classroom is nevertheless a subject of debate, with *myriad* arguments being advanced both in support of and against its impact on the role of a teacher.

One of the major drawbacks of the computer is lack of flexibility. Due to its



programmatic *limitations*, its teaching is *uniform*, repetitive, standardised and therefore *unsuited to* the specific needs of a student. For example, it can only answer questions which have been programmed into it but fails to answer any *unusual, non-standard* and unprecedented question. By contrast, a human teacher is able to respond flexibly with giving well-tailored, persuasive and inspiring answers. For this reason, a computer hardly functions as effectively as a human teacher does.

Another disadvantage of the computer, which makes it *unaligned with* the philosophy of the contemporary education, is its failure to interact with students. Out of technical constraints, the computer is interested in *eliciting* the desired response only. Students' unexpected performance, potentially exceptional and distinguished, is not recognised by the computer. It is fair to say that computers achieve nothing but make all education into an *uncritical* type of vocational training. Students are conditioned to absorb information without questioning and given no chance to express their personal opinions.

There are some other problems inherent in the computer-based teaching, such as inability to discipline students and failing to *attend to* students' emotional needs, making this model of teaching not as competent as the traditional style. However, the contribution of the computer as a teaching aid can never be *underrated*. It not only assists teachers to present educational materials in diversified ways but also provides repetitive *drills* to improve the students' command of knowledge. With the computer, the teacher can spend less time on paper work and concentrate more on the development of a student in other aspects, such as creativity and teamwork skills. It is essential to advancing rounded education.

Taking into consideration those above-mentioned characteristics of computer-based teaching, one can conclude that the computer can only serve as a teaching aid, facilitating students' interest in a topic and assisting them to take in information faster, rather than *taking the place of* the teacher.

Vocabulary:

1. myriad=numerous=many=countless
2. limitation=constraint=restriction



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3. uniform=identical=standardised=homogeneous
4. unsuited to=incompatible with
5. unusual=uncommon=atypical
6. non-standard=irregular
7. unaligned with=inconsistent with
8. elicit=obtain
9. uncritical-unsuspecting
10. attend to=look after=care for
11. underrate=underestimate
12. drill=practice=exercise
13. take the place of=replace

TOPIC 99

Although it is generally prohibited, corporal punishment persists in many families. Do you think corporal punishment is an acceptable way to regulate children's behaviours?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Physical punishment is of concern for many researchers. A subject of broad interest is how physical punishments link to the internal and external influences that a child may be exposed to. Either from studies or people's experience, the use of corporal punishment can cause short and long term effects on a child's personality, identity and behaviour.



Although many parents attempt to control the intensity of physical punishment, their behaviour, *in many instances*, increases the likelihood of causing remediless harm to their children. The distinction between discipline and abuse is hardly *clear-cut*, and there is no assurance that parents can control their discipline properly. Physical *injury* seems to be an inevitable result in most cases. For example, spansks are widely accepted by many parents as a method of discipline, but, unfortunately, most parents hit harder when children recommit the offence. Injuries are therefore well-documented.

In addition to physical harm, corporal punishment has been considered as the facilitator of many kinds of emotional harms. For example, children who are exposed to intense and frequent physical punishment are more likely than their peers to suffer depression, unhappiness, anxiety and feelings of hopelessness. The accumulative effects of these problems have a *profound* influence over most survivors of physical punishment. They lose courage to venture and have no desire for being creative individuals, as they only try things their parents permit them to do.

There are also some other negative outcomes, such as behavioural problems. Corporal punishment is perhaps not the sole factor responsible for delinquent behaviour among children, but there is no denying that it increases children's tendency to act out and attack their siblings, peers or even parents. It is particularly true when children receive physical punishment intensely. Even worse, victims of physical punishment might use violence as one of the main parenting methods when they become parents. It is a vicious cycle.

In conclusion, physical punishment can affect a child's life forever. It is imperative that every parent control the extent to which they physically punish their children in order to avoid any negative behaviour problems.

Vocabulary:

1. physical punishment=corporal punishment
2. in many instances=in many cases=under some circumstances
3. clear-cut=clear-definite-straightforward
4. injury=harm:



5. profound= overwhelming = intense = deep = great = extreme

TOPIC 100

It is not uncommon that children are required to obey the rule of their parents and teachers. Some people are worried that too much control over children will not prepare them well for their adult life. Discuss both sides and give your opinion.

SAMPLE ANSWER

Adults' intervention plays a pivotal role in a child's development. Despite this general knowledge, people are very often confronted with the arguments about the appropriateness of some traditional teaching styles and methods, such as enforcing rules and requiring children's compliance. I agree that rules set by parents contribute greatly to the shaping of children's behaviour, personalities and all other personal characteristics, although I question the view that it is definitely beneficial to children.

There is no point in denying that rule setting is possibly the most effective method in overcoming some upbringing difficulties, such as protecting children from dangers and guiding them to act *rationally*. Children are *adventuresome* and full of curiosity. They attempt various activities, either with *deliberation* or on the spur of the moment. Imposing rules is therefore imperative, as it prevents many problems from occurring. For example, forbidding accessing knives, medicine, microwaves or ovens can minimise the risk of accidents and injuries. Some other rules, such as forbidding spitting, nose-picking and foul language, lead children to develop proper *demeanour* in different social situations, and to adhere to strict rules of professional etiquettes from their early childhood.

However, rules should be *lifted* gradually as children grow older, especially when it becomes clear that rules tend to *restrain* children's mental development.



In a traditional classroom, for example, rules are set and applied to *underpin* the authority of a teacher. Students are not allowed to pose questions at will, nor are they allowed to challenge teachers' answers. Many of their questions remain unanswered, presenting obstacles to their learning process and forming numerous *misconceptions*. Another problem is that it will discourage students from *reflecting on* what they have learnt, and *dampen* their passion for learning. They are trained as *mechanical* or rote learners, while their aptitude for creativity is *stifled*.

As indicated above, whether to impose rules on children is determined as much by the age of children as by the appropriateness of rules themselves. For younger children, strict rules should be set to ensure children's safety and health. For older children, rules should be concerned about children's behaviour on social occasions. When children become responsible and knowledgeable *with age*, rules should be *phased out*.

Vocabulary:

1. rationally=sensibly=reasonably
2. adventuresome=adventurous=daring=courageous=audacious
3. deliberation=careful consideration
4. demeanour=behaviour=manner=conduct
5. Lift=revoke=rescind=cancel
6. restrain=hold back=hold down=control
7. underpin=buttress=underline=bolster=strengthen=fortify
8. misconception-mistaken belief=misunderstanding=fallacy
9. reflect on=mull over=meditate on=contemplate
10. dampen=reduce=diminish
11. mechanical=unthinking
12. stifle=suppress=restrain=repress
13. with age=as one grows up
14. phase out=abolish=forsake



TOPIC 101

The children who grow up in a family short of money are more capable of dealing with problems in adult life than children who are brought up by wealthy parents. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Of those elements that bear a considerable influence on children's personal development, one of the most influential is family background. There is a perception that the children who grow up in an *impoverished* family are more capable of solving problems than those from an *affluent* family. In my opinion, it might not always be the case.

One's problem-solving abilities are mainly derived from the knowledge and experience obtained during his or her *adolescence*. Not surprisingly, children from poor families are less likely to maximise their education. First of all, their parents are unwilling to select a reputable school for them, as tuition fees can take up a large proportion of family income. Another reason is that education, in general, requires devoted time and energy, but many children have to work from an early age in order to supplement their parents' income. Because of their poor educational background, they do not have specialised knowledge in solving problems as required in a specific area of work. They are thus *at a* severe *disadvantage* in problem-solving in a working environment.

Another problem that *plagues* the children from less advantaged backgrounds is their limited access to financial support and expert guidance. Children with highly-educated and rich parents are more likely to be better off economically, not only because they have sufficient financial backup but also because they can easily seek the support from others, for example, the friends of their parents, professionals in different occupations. It is true that compared with disadvantaged children, children from medium or high class families have many more opportunities to attend social *functions* like balls, *banquets*, and so forth, where they improve social skills, learn professional etiquettes and consolidate



their *social network*. With a larger social network, they are *at an advantage* in problem-solving.

As discussed above, while children from a poor background are normally socially *inept* and less knowledgeable, those from middle or upper class families have easy access to resources. These distinctions *corroborate* the assertion that family background has *undisputed* impacts on children's problem solving abilities.

Vocabulary:

1. impoverished=poor=indigent=destitute=disadvantaged
2. affluent=wealthy=well-off=financially comfortable
3. adolescence=teens=teenage years-youth
4. at a disadvantage^ a weak position=vulnerable=disadvantaged
5. plague=afflict=trouble=bother=beleaguer=harass
6. function=gathering=social occasion
7. banquet=feast=formal meal
8. social network=social circle
9. at an advantage=in a strong position=get the upper hand
10. inept-incompetent-unskilled
11. corroborate=support=substantiate=back up=uphold
12. undisputed=undeniable=unquestionable

TOPIC 102

One's character traits are strongly influenced by the place where he or she grew up. Discuss the impacts of an urban environment and those of a rural environment on a child's character development.

SAMPLE ANSWER



It is well acknowledged that healthy growth conditions in early life are the prerequisite of a child's positive growth patterns. For this reason, some people are concerned about the impacts of living in rural or urban areas on a child's character development. Below is an outline of the potential impacts of a rural or urban environment on a child's personality and behaviour.

Poverty is one of the main problems in the countryside, either *entrenched* or *escalating*, leading directly to poor living standards. Because of parents' limited *disposable* income, children in rural areas are less likely to receive adequate child care or comfortable housing than their urban counterparts. These conditions are crucial to children's physical health and emotional well-being. Likewise, the soaring abuse and neglect rates in rural families negatively influence children's character building. Children in rural areas are ready outlets for their parents, who feel frustrated and depressed in maintaining a standard of living. Raised in an environment where violence is normal and consequences of violence are ignored, children might grow up to be individuals who are less conscious of the rights of others (including family members and friends) and more likely to use violence.

Another problem is literacy. Low standards of education, which seem to be a defining characteristic of rural areas, are attributed to a mixture of factors—lack of public schools, children's early involvement in income-generating activities and inadequate awareness of education. It is quite clear that income *disparity* between urban and rural families leads to the difference in the access to education, which has a *bearing* on children's characters. While a well-educated child is confident, *broad-minded*, creative and cultivated, a poorly-educated child is inhibited, *narrow-minded* or even *boorish*.

In spite of the fact that urban children are able to receive an excellent education, it does not automatically mean that they will grow up without character flaws. In fact, it seems that they are more susceptible to bad habits and social evils. Illegal substances are more common among urban juveniles than among rural adolescents. *Uniformity* and *lifelessness* of outdoor environments is another problem. Garden settings, which are believed to have a *healing* power for people living under great pressure, are rare in a *metropolitan* area. By comparison, children living in the country are more likely to access outdoor play, a recreation activity that can improve moods and prevent feelings of isolation.



Based on the points outlined above, I believe that environment has a direct bearing on children's character development. Poverty and illiteracy are two common features of rural areas and can contribute to children's negative characters. By contrast, children from urban areas are more likely to feel pressured and isolated, which can trigger erratic behaviour.

Vocabulary:

1. entrenched=well-established=ingrained=deep-rooted
2. escalating=rising=swelling=getting bigger
3. disposable=used at will
4. disparity=difference = discrepancy
5. bearing=influence=effect=impact=relevance
6. broad-minded = tolerant = open-minded
7. narrow-minded=bigoted=prejudiced
8. boorish=ill-mannered=impolite=loutish=coarse=crude=vulgar
9. uniformity= sameness
10. lifelessness=dullness=insipidness=dreariness
11. healing=curative=remedial=therapeutic
12. metropolitan=urban=municipal

TOPIC 103

Do you think it is good to push students to study hard in their youth?

SAMPLE ANSWER

High expectations for children are nothing new in today's society. It leads



to the tendency to push children to study harder and harder. In my opinion, the *connection* between effort and achievement is quite obvious and should not be denied.

As children grow older, they are more capable of learning more and the amount of time they spend in studying should increase correspondingly. Hard work can raise the *odds* of success by increasing their knowledge (both general and *specialised*), improving their abilities and expanding their skill set. All are essential to their success later in life. Without the full *commitment* to schoolwork, students might end up with struggling with failing school performance and even dropping out of the school.

Full engagement in schooling also matches the trends of a modern society. To succeed in today's challenging economy, young people need advanced skills in core subjects like English, math and science, as well as the ability to use computers, solve problems effectively, think critically and work in teams. It appears that most students lack motivation to study and their attention can be diverted easily by such *distractions* as video games. Without an *unmistakable* message delivered to them that academic achievement is what makes them survive in this competitive world, they will not learn as much as their ability and effort permits.

Despite the great value of hardworking, one should bear in mind the fact that students of all ages need time to play and relax. They should be given freedom to develop their hobbies and encouraged to dabble in different activities, so they can learn in depth about the world, explore ideas and *soothe* themselves. Children's *tolerance* for stress is another noteworthy issue. Failing to cope with stress might disable students from maintaining their interest in studying. A prolonged period of learning is disruptive to children's learning outcomes, distancing students from critical thinking and turning them into *rote learners*.

From what has been discussed, studying hard is critical to a student's success, helping him or her acquire more knowledge in his or her youth and leading him or her to focus on schoolwork. However, the balance between work and relaxation should be considered in equal measure. Parents and teachers are advised to help children design their timetables scientifically in case that they are *fed up with* studying.



Vocabulary:

1. connection=correlation=relationship=link
2. odds=chance=probability= likelihood
3. specialised=particular=specific=focused
4. commitment-dedication-devotion
5. distraction-diversion
6. unmistakable=clear=unambiguous=clear-cut
7. soothe-comfort=appease=pacify
8. tolerance=forbearance=acceptance
9. rote learner=learner who learns things by repeating them
10. fed up with=tired of-bored with

TOPIC 104

Some people argue that it is good for children to stay away from their families and go to a boarding school, others suggest that children live with their families and attend a day school. What is your opinion?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Many parents expect their children to live at home until college. However, there are occasions on which parents have to send their children to a boarding school, an educational institution not only giving educational instruction but also providing food and *lodging*. A boarding school, as an alternative to a day school, has its advantages and disadvantages, as outlined below.

The boarding school option means early separation from parents. For this reason, a student's self- reliance and independence are both *bolstered*. Living away from home, students have to make most of daily decisions by themselves. They have to adjust to another set of new circumstances and surroundings, which is a good opportunity for them to exercise a variety of skills, such as social skills. Rather than depending on their parents, students have to do the laundry



themselves, manage their diets, and keep their bedrooms clean and tidy. They are more *self-disciplined* than those who attend day schools.

In addition, there is no denying that to many parents, a boarding school provides a choice that *merits* particular attention, and sometimes, the sole option. Geographic *relocation*, for example, presents a problem of educational *continuity*. Because of their career, parents might have to resettle in a neighbourhood where schooling facilities are inadequate. A boarding school is the best option to them, as it protects children from the influence of frequent relocations. It also suits those families where parents are so devoted to their work that they fail to bear care responsibilities.

Although boarding schools succeed in satisfying the needs of some families, opponents are concerned about their mixed impacts on children's development. For example, their intervention on children's academic years appears to be excessive. Extracurricular programmes occupy children's free time and children are required to obey a large number of rules, most of which are *stringent* and redundant. Any minor mistake can *engender* punishment or even *expulsion*. *Without permission*, students cannot go outside defined school bounds. It is no exaggeration to say that children are virtually living in an isolated world.

From what has been discussed, one can observe that a boarding school has its position in a fast-paced society, assisting children to enhance their independence and undertaking care responsibilities as a replacement of parents, although students might have to face limited contact with their families, communities and the loss of freedom.

Vocabulary:

1. lodging=accommodation=temporary housing
2. bolster=boost
3. self-disciplined=temperate=moderate
4. merit-deserve
5. relocation=repositioning=moving=resettlement
6. continuity=stability
7. stringent=strict=rigorous=rigid=inflexible



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8. engender = provoke = cause = bring out
9. expulsion = exclusion = discharge = kicking out
10. without permission = without authorisation

TOPIC 105

People tend to believe that all young adults should undertake a period of unpaid work for the good of the community. Do you agree or disagree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

In recent years, it has become more and more common for societies to encourage and organise young people to work as volunteers for non-profit organisations and the community. Community' service has even been proposed as a requirement for graduation in some middle schools. There is a lot of opposition to "mandatory" volunteer work, a term which seems to be self-contradictory. I agree that the voluntary participation of youths is required, but volunteerism is a preferred option to most youngsters in today's world.

A fact to support volunteerism is that it allows young people to gain experience and exercise skills, which are beneficial for their performance in the future workplace. Most of the young workers that are volunteering have little social experience, as they spend much of their time at school. Working with others and interacting with people from all social backgrounds, they can enhance their abilities of problem solving, communication and teamwork. They are thus better prepared for the public life in the future.

Another benefit of volunteerism is the development, of a young worker's motivation to help others and serve the interest of others *without reward*, a spirited fight back against individualism and egoism. A worrying trend in today's society is that a young adult's motivation is sourced more from individual interest than from the interest of others. Organising volunteer service on a large scale,



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especially among youngsters, can *counteract* the corrosive effect of this trend. Youngsters are directed to look after the *good* of others and help others without asking for payment or reward, in the long term, it upholds a sense of community, rebuilds the *cohesion* among members of community and reduces *distrust* that is *escalating* between people.

Despite those merits of organised volunteer work, participants' entire willingness should be guaranteed. Otherwise, they would be less willing or likely to commit to their work. Instead of enforcing a policy without *consulting* young people in advance, schools can take another approach, showing youngsters the *meaningfulness* of their commitment to the local community. If possible, young adults can be given a range of options so they can choose one that is most helpful for their skill *enhancement*.

It seems from the above discussion that youngsters should be encouraged to participate in volunteer work, increasing both skills and their awareness of the long-run interest of the community in which they live. If administered well, volunteer work has benefits to both individual workers and the society as a whole.

Vocabulary:

1. without reward=without payment=free of charge=voluntarily
2. counteract=counter=offset=neutralize
3. good=interest=benefit
4. cohesion=unity=solidarity
5. distrust=disbelief=suspicion
6. escalate=worsen=intensify
7. consult=discuss with=seek advice from
8. meaningfulness=significance
9. enhancement=improvement



TOPIC 106

Some people think that students benefit greatly from going to private secondary schools, but others assert that private secondary schools have a negative impact on the young generation and the society alike. Discuss both views.

SAMPLE ANSWER

Parents seem to have ongoing preference for a private secondary school, although they have to pay extremely high tuitions for their children. Despite the fact that a private school is very often associated with quality service, professional teaching staff, competitive courses and excellent facilities, critics are concerned about the harmful effects of private schools on society. The merits and *demerits* of this argument will be explored below.

Unarguably, private schools *outperform* public schools based on their more flexible and advanced academic and extracurricular programmes. With this *distinguishing* advantage, private schools are capable of adjusting their programmes for students of different levels and assisting them to attain their objectives individually. Another remarkable quality of a private school is its proficiency in *formulating* and promoting different non-academic programmes, such as group sports and outings to foster students' physical, emotional and social well-being.

Private schools are also acclaimed as experts in addressing students' discipline problems. Keen to *consolidate* its image as an excellent quality provider, a private school focuses not only on a student's academic performance but also on their demeanour. For this reason, physical fights, drug use, bullying and other behaviour problems are less likely to be seen in private schools. On the other hand, private schools have high entrance requirements and tuition standards, resulting in relative *homogeneity* of students' family background. Students are mainly from medium or high income families. Upbringing and strict school discipline jointly contribute to better behaviour of students. It is no wonder that most of private school students are *good-mannered* and have a positive self-



image.

Although the position of a private school as a well-qualified education provider is prominent, it benefits some sections of school-age populations only. Because of tuition fees, a private school is accessible only to those who are able to pay, rather than those who are able to learn. It has *denied* most students' access to quality education, potentially causing the gap between rich and poor to widen.

The arguments presented above have created a *dilemma* when people evaluate the effects of a private school on society. On the one hand, the private school is better than the public school in many aspects, such as teaching staff, learning environment and facilities. On the other, it tends to discriminate against students from low income families by maintaining high tuition fees. While teenagers from high income families continue to benefit from their social status, those of a lower class suffer enormously from lack of educational opportunities.

Vocabulary:

1. demerit=bad quality
2. outperform=perform better than = surpass
3. distinguishing=distinctive=unique
4. formulate=devise=invent
5. consolidate=strengthen-secure
6. homogeneity=sameness
7. good-mannered=courteous=polite=cultivated=refined=educated
8. deny=reject=decline=tum down
9. dilemma=quandary=predicament=impasse



TOPIC 107

Some people believe that students who graduate from high school should have one year's time to obtain work experience before going to university. Do you agree or disagree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Schooling plays an *integral* part in individual's life. At the end of high school, students who wish to continue with their education face two probable choices—either *suspend* their study for a year to obtain work experience, or go straight into university. The second choice appears to be more *sensible*.

Coming fresh out of high school, students do not have a clear understanding of the *harsh* realities of the world. Either in academic background or in work experience, they are not in a strong position to undertake early employment. Exposure to an unpredictable and *daunting* world will easily cause a sense of frustration and shake their confidence, both having a devastating effect on their development later in life.

Another problem of early employment is that most young people are not able to make a correct career decision. Choosing a career requires sufficient knowledge of one's own strengths, aptitudes and the trends in the job market. Most young adults, unfortunately, lack such knowledge. Their initial experience in a job might lead them to jump on a conclusion and devote themselves to a career without careful consideration. So fast is their *fondness* for this job that their *affinity* to the job is mostly *ephemeral*. It can ruin their entire working lives.

Another noteworthy problem of working is that it might divert a young adult's attention from his or her previous academic objectives. If students give up the opportunity of being educated and *pursue* other *ventures*, they will lose their abilities and willpower to learn something carefully and patiently. The side effect of *disengagement* from schooling might not be significant in the first several years, but with age, it will surely disadvantage them a lot. Before long, *disillusioned* with early employment, young people might *resolve to resume*



study but soon discover that they are not suitable for a learning environment any more.

It is therefore clear that students should not attempt a career life once they finish high school's study. Instead they should go to college directly, and ensure that their future is built on solid foundations, before exploring what else life has to offer.

Vocabulary:

1. schooling=education
2. integral=vital=central=fundamental
3. suspend=defer=postpone
4. sensible=rational=reasonable
5. harsh=cruel=ruthless
6. daunting=intimidating=demoralising=discouraging
7. fondness =affection
8. affinity=liking
9. ephemeral=short-lived=transient=fleeting=brief
10. pursue=practice=engage in
11. venture=undertaking
12. disengagement=disconnection=severance
13. disillusioned=disenchanted=disappointed=disheartened
14. resolve to = decide to=be determined to
15. resume=recommence=restart

TOPIC 108

In order to improve the quality of education, high school students should be encouraged to evaluate and criticise their teachers, but others think it will result in loss of respect and discipline in classroom. What is your opinion?

SAMPLE ANSWER



Teacher appraisal is not a new instrument in improving teaching performance or developing teacher Gaining. However, when it comes to inviting the input of students and seeking their comments on teachers' performance, there is disagreement. Some people *object to* this practice, saying that it leads to the loss of respect and discipline. In my opinion, students' participation in teacher appraisal is definitely helpful, but it should be administrated properly.

A strong *argument* for using student ratings to evaluate teachers is that students' judgement is reliable and *impartial*. Because of their ongoing interaction with teachers throughout the semester, students have the authority to measure the performance and competence of a teacher, with the knowledge they have obtained from learning and the *stance* they have adopted toward the subject taught. A critical analysis of students' feedback enables teachers to enhance their competence and adjust teaching aims and methods for better attainment of students' learning objectives.

Students are also concerned about whether the teacher is fully *committed* to his or her job. The value of a teacher is determined as much by competence as by *commitment*. The school can therefore assess the performance of a teacher by collecting students' feedback on some *observable* facts, such as a teacher's *punctuality* and the *legibility* of his or her writing on the board. Teachers who perform poorly are advised to *reflect* deeply *on* their teaching practice, the drawbacks in particular, which is the key to the improvement of their performance.

Despite those overt advantages of encouraging students' input, analysis of their input is important and should be handled carefully. Misinterpretation of students' opinions might leave teachers an *inaccurate* picture of their strengths and weaknesses and lead them into a poor judgement about what they can do to satisfy die needs of their students. It is also important to guide teachers to perceive the feedback *sensibly*; otherwise, they might have feelings of *powerlessness*.

What has been discussed is to support a notion that students' input provides an important source of data for evaluating teachers, helping teachers not only to discover their disadvantages but also to make an improvement.

Vocabulary:



1. object to=disapprove of
2. argument=reason=justification
3. impartial=objective-unbiased=unprejudiced
4. stance=attitude=position
5. committed=devoted
6. commitment=dedication=devotion
7. observable=apparent
8. punctuality=timekeeping
9. legibility=readability
10. reflect on=meditate on=think over
11. inaccurate-imprecise=erroneous=incorrect
12. sensibly=wisely=prudently
13. powerlessness=lack of authority

TOPIC 109

Schools should teach children the academic subjects which have a close relationship with their future careers, so other subjects like music and sports are not important. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

There are many indications that schools have become increasingly vocation-oriented in recent years, with integrating many work-based courses in curriculum. Some academics advocate that sport and music classes should be cancelled in exchange for more academic classes, in an effort to help students beat other jobseekers. This argument has several strong elements that deserve attention.

The first is that few employers are interested in a job applicant's



performance as music lover or sports fan. Instead, they are keen to assess candidates' academic records and professional skills. At a time when business grows complex and skill-based, the evidence that candidates have sufficient knowledge relating to their job profession is more capable to attract the eye of recruiters. A student *excelling in* a subject is far more marketable in the job market than one playing a music instrument *adeptly*, or displaying talents in a sport.

Another reason is that students, in most cases, engage themselves in sports or music *spontaneously*. There is no need to formalise their pastimes, when the amount of time they spend in academic activities is *desperately* inadequate. Teenagers and young adults have plenty of energy to *expend* daily. Even when heavily *loaded* with learning tasks, they *exert themselves* for outdoors and group activities. They gather for sport activities and concerts, but seldom review their textbooks after school. Given these elements, the top priority for educators is to maximise students' contact with academic classes at school and to recommend sports and music as extracurricular activities only.

The above discussion favours a conclusion that sport and music classes should be cancelled so students are more likely to commit themselves to academic courses, which are more important to their future employability.

Vocabulary:

1. excel in = do well in = be skillful in
2. adeptly = adroitly = dexterously = skillfully
3. spontaneously = impulsively = instinctively
4. desperately — extremely
5. expend = release = consume = use = use up
6. loaded = laden = burdened
7. exert oneself = work very hard



TOPIC 110

Today, more school leavers are unable to find jobs. Discuss the causes of rising unemployment among young adults and suggest any solutions.

SAMPLE ANSWER

Unemployment is one of the greatest social problems of our time. The young adults' unemployment is, in particular, a *troubling* issue *preoccupying* many governments across the world. Economic recession or volatility is very often *presumed* to be the main reason, but there are some other forces that foster the consistency of young adults' unemployment, which can be analysed and tackled separately. This essay will present an overall view of these causes and potential solutions.

The biggest single cause of rising unemployment among young people is their lack of work experience and qualifications. Fresh from high school or college, young *jobseekers* generally have little, if any, practical experience. Besides, most of the knowledge they have acquired is from text, which is not satisfactorily consistent with the general practice in the workplace. This weakness can be *fatal* at a time when the market has a strong preference on *skilled* and experienced applicants, who are ready to fill vacancies without requiring any job training. It is also the reason why employers tend to believe that young candidates possess less value than do those already in the workforce.

Another cause of high unemployment is placed at the feet of the youth themselves. Before they reach the working age, young people have little interaction with the world outside the classroom, and, as a consequence, they know little of the situation of the labour market. By the time they graduate, they have an inaccurate picture of the world. It leads to their exceedingly high occupational and wage aspiration. In addition to remuneration and financial incentives, young applicants might have other requirements, such as working environment. It causes them to lose many opportunities to join the workforce



immediately.

Tackling youth unemployment requires the commitment of both society and youngsters themselves. The government can provide employers with taxation incentives for recruiting young workers. Low-cost courses, especially job training courses, should be made available for the young unemployed. Consultancy services can be provided *free of charge*, giving youngsters instruction on job-seeking and helping them make proper *adjustment* from school to work.

As suggested above, lack of work experience and inappropriate attitudes toward employment are two main reasons that account for youngsters' unemployment. For young people, possibly nothing can be more *abrupt* than the transition from school to work. In reducing unemployment, the government should play an active role and take a number of measures, with the emphasis placed on improving young people's skills and adjusting their job attitudes.

Vocabulary:

1. troubling=worrying=disturbing
2. preoccupy=obsess=possess=fixate
3. presume=assume=believe
4. jobseeker=job applicant=job candidate
5. fatal=deadly=lethal
6. skilled=skilfi.il=experienced=competent=proficient=well-trained
7. free of charge=at no cost=without charge
8. adjustment=alteration
9. abrupt=sudden=unexpected

TOPIC 111

In recent years, the proportion of the crimes committed by youngsters *is* on the rise. Discuss causes to this problem and suggest solutions.



SAMPLE ANSWER

Juvenile *delinquency* refers to the phenomenon that a child or young person behaves in a criminal way. In many countries, juvenile delinquency has become a topical issue. There are a wide range of factors that account for adolescents' strong aggressive and criminal tendencies in a modern society, including poverty, repeated exposure to violence, *unstable* family life, delinquent peer groups, and so forth. Some of them will be discussed in detail below, followed by suggested solutions.

The most common factor responsible for juvenile crime is the loss of the family life and the increase in family violence. More and more parents nowadays show an *inclination to* abuse their children and treat them as an outlet of stress. It leaves young children and teenagers a misleading impression about violence and gives them composure when acting violently. Busy lifestyle is another *culprit*, reducing the chance of interaction between parents and children and preventing children from living and studying in a normal way. A feeling of being neglected can cause problems like learning *disorders*, a state in which a young person lacks motivation to organise and follow learning plans.

Exposure to violence is another factor that plays a big role in the increase of juvenile delinquency. Many studies have made it clear that the upsurge in televised violence and the video games that have violence as the main *theme* is closely linked to young adults' aggressive behaviour. This effect has been compounded by the spread of the Internet, which tends to negatively impact young people of all ages, of both genders, at all economic levels and all levels of intelligence.

There are some other determining factors, but it is believed that family life and media are the most influential. In combating juvenile delinquency, one should focus on the following elements. First, an underage person should be correctly *oriented* in life and their negative experience should be minimised. Whenever a behaviour problem arises, children should be given correct and immediate instruction. Meanwhile, it is imperative that parents limit or even prevent children's exposure to violence, a trigger for their aggressive behaviours.



Vocabulary:

1. delinquency-criminal behaviour-wrongdoing-law-breaking
2. unstable=volatile=erratic
3. inclination to=tendency to=fondness for=preference for
4. culprit=cause=reason
5. disorder= confusion
6. theme=subject=thesis
7. orient=direct

TOPIC 112

What are the benefits of requiring young people to serve the army? Does participation in community work qualify as an alternative?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Despite the fact that military conscription is voluntary in much of the world, it remains compulsory in some countries like South Korea. In peacetime, serving the army is more than simply protecting motherland from any potential military attack. An alternative view is that it can be *deemed* as a test of *manhood* and a *rite of passage* from boyhood into manhood. While military training has its merits, some alternatives, such as community service, can be taken into account.

Military service allows young people to *reap* personal benefits and enhance their personal growth. First of all, trainees can raise their physical fitness and enjoy better health. They meanwhile develop a sense of team spirit and improve abilities to get along well with others. They learn to cope with problems independently and gain self-confidence. It also helps expand their social circle, a valuable, although intangible, asset when they return to civilian life. Servicemen have no difficulties in winning others' respect and their experience is *comparable* to education, work experience or recommendations. They are very often perceived



as efficient, organised and excellent time managers.

Despite those benefits brought by military service, its mandatory' nature is the *nub* of the argument. Many young people cannot cope with the high level of stress in the army. That's why community' service is suggested as an alternative in most countries. As distinct from military service, which demands full engagement of *conscripts*, community service requires young volunteers to contribute part of their time, energy and skills only. Moreover, community service tends to *render* more direct assistance to participants in preparing for the workforce. By volunteering, young adults develop skills, gain work experience and explore career options. They can also acquire practical knowledge through service.

In view of the advantages and disadvantages of military service outlined above, one can conclude that military service is helpful only when it is voluntary. Mandatory military service does not fit all young people, whereas community service benefits every young person who wants to make a smooth transition from school to work.

Vocabulary:

1. deem=think of=consider=regard
2. manhood=adulthood=adult years=maturity
3. rite=ritual=ceremony
4. passage=walkway =path
5. reap=harvest=gather=obtain=acquire
6. comparable=similar=analogous
7. nub=crucial point=core
8. conscript=recruit=rookie
9. render=provide=deliver=give



TOPIC 113

Many people join distance-learning programmes (study material, post, TV, Internet) and study at home, but some people think that it cannot bring the same benefit as attending colleges or universities does. Do you agree or disagree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

To *keep abreast of* the 21st century, large numbers of people are seeking to receive tertiary education. Distance learning, a *state-of-the-art* educational model, has received wide *currency* among qualification seekers. Despite being an important alternative to formal education, whether distance learning can achieve the same effect as the traditional form of university education—i. e., going to university in person—is genuinely open to discussion.

Distance learning, first of all, requires a high degree of maturity or commitment from students because it proceeds in the absence of teachers or tutors. It suits those self-motivated and *self-directed* students, instead of those who have difficulty in self-scheduling and independent learning. For those young learners, who are generally lack of motivation and *self-control*, their learning effort tends to be *disorganised*, *futile* and fragmentary. They will over time develop bad study habits and *lag behind* their peers.

The second weakness of distance learning is its over-dependence on media. Media have a myriad of contents that are likely to divert students' attention from their study. Online games and browsing webpages, for example, consume much of young learners' time, in addition, sitting in front of the computer for several hours *in succession* might cause boredom, fatigue, or other physical problems. The university campus, in contrast, leaves no chance for this kind of problems, because students are supervised and monitored by faculty members. Meanwhile, their interactions with classmates are constant. It is beneficial for learners to organise teamwork and develop interpersonal relationships.

As indicated above, under no circumstance can distance learning be taken as a qualified substitute for traditional methods of learning. Learners' low



motivation and commitment, inadequate interaction with teachers and some other inherent problems have made it nearly impossible to replace a traditional class with a virtual class.

Vocabulary:

1. keep abreast of=stay up-to-date with=stay aware of
2. state-of-the-art=modern=up-to-date
3. currency=popularity=support=prevalence
4. self-directed-independent-self-ruling
5. self-control=self-discipline=restraint=willpower
6. disorganised=muddled=unsystematic
7. futile=useless=vain=ineffectual=fruitless
8. lag behind-drop back-drop behind=fall back=fall behind
9. in succession=consecutively=successively=in a row

TOPIC 114

It is argued that university students should study a full range of subjects, instead of some specific subjects. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

SAMPLE ANSWER

Since the second half of the last century, there has been a switch from the traditional manufacturing economy to a knowledge economy. Much of the world has *placed a premium on* the knowledge and skills one can obtain from higher education. Some academics suggest that university students should widen their study from a limited range of subject orientation to a high complexity of subjects. This proposed change *merits serious consideration*.



From a social aspect, current employers show a tendency to recruit youngsters who can do a various array of jobs within a single position rather than job specialists. A clerk working for a bank, for example, is required to possess a collection of skills, ranging from those learnt in the field of finance, accounting and economy to those in other relevant subjects, such as management, communication and sociology. As the job market is becoming increasingly competitive, students who dabble in different specialised areas and have experience in interdisciplinary study are expected to be in a *preponderant* position.

From students' perspective, learning different subjects can be both personally *fulfilling* and skill-enhancing. Many students tend to perceive it as *unwieldy* when studying several subjects they have no experience in. This challenge, if overcome, leaves individuals more room for skill enhancement. For example, extra learning requires students to *take in* essential information within a time frame. In coping with this task, students have to develop outstanding time management skills and show expertise in *juggling* different jobs at a time. With *know-how*, they are more *adjustable* in this fast-changing social setting.

According to the above advantages, learning different subjects does good to university students. Not only does it make students time-conscious and *versatile*, but also helps students to match the needs of a fast-changing and competitive society.

Vocabulary:

1. Place a premium on
2. Merit consideration=deserve consideration
3. Preponderant = advantageous
4. Fulfilling = rewarding = pleasing = satisfying
5. Unwieldy = unmanageable
6. Take in= absorb=assimilate
7. Juggle = fit in = manage = organize = cope with = deal with
8. Know-how = knowledge = area of knowledge = area of study
9. Adjustable = flexible = adaptable
10. Versatile = multitalented = all-round



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